

Kant and Idealism Tom Rockmore

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TOM ROCKMORE

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[W]hat was wrong with some of the [revolutionary socialist] group's philosophical ideas was exactly that nobody in any Oxford seminar would have batted an eyelid at them. The founding principle of materialism, so it gravely instructed its members, was that there was a real world out there, of which we could have knowledge. They did not seem aware that only the odd raving Idealist hiding out in a cave somewhere in Montana would have denied this.

Terry Eagleton, *The Gatekeeper*

That the world is a product of the freedom of intelligence is the determinate and express principle of idealism.

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between  
Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*



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# Introduction

Idealism is routinely considered to be an instance of identification with the dominant class,<sup>1</sup> a huge philosophical mistake,<sup>2</sup> committed to a contra-intuitive doctrine,<sup>3</sup> out of date,<sup>4</sup> impossible to defend, even perhaps not possible to state clearly,<sup>5</sup> something that need not be mentioned in discussing even the most important idealist thinkers,<sup>6</sup> in short the kind of thing one would be better off not being around, and certainly not something one should be espousing.<sup>7</sup> Two of the main philosophical movements of the past century define their positions through the rejection of idealism. Once Engels had invented Marxism, he and his followers understood it as opposing idealism on the basis of materialism. Anglo-American philosophy emerged in England around the turn of the twentieth century by displacing British idealism. Since history is written by the victors, no one should be surprised that later English-language discussion has rarely been kind to and even more rarely informed about idealism. The result is widespread ignorance about the nature and contribution of idealist thinkers, particularly their contribution to epistemology. This ignorance does not stop at the critical philosophy of Kant, whose idealism is, at this late date, though very controversial, still largely unknown.

This is a book about Kantian and other idealist approaches to knowledge, in particular about idealist constructivism. This approach was invented in modern times by thinkers such as Hobbes and Vico who are not ordinarily considered to be idealists. Later it was independently reinvented by Kant, who intro-

duced it into German idealism. It was developed in his wake by post-Kantian German idealists as well as by thinkers who are not ordinarily considered to be idealists, or who are considered to be nonidealists or even anti-idealists, such as Marx. I will be arguing in terms of the philosophical tradition, particularly Kant, that following the decline of metaphysical realism, constructivism offers a lively, interesting, and important approach to knowledge.

Though some of the most interesting thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition are widely taken to be, and even took themselves to be, idealists, there is no agreement on the meaning of “idealism.” Idealism, which is occasionally defined but widely decried, and more rarely defended, is for the most part *terra incognita*, a mystery to many, perhaps even to its most important exponents, and routinely misunderstood and frequently misdescribed by its opponents. In part, idealism is so little known because, though frequently rejected, it is not often studied in detail. Hence one aim of this book will be to survey, to classify (and reclassify) some main forms of idealism, to examine some of the more important objections raised against them, and to make a preliminary case for the contemporary relevance of at least one strand in the tangled idealist web, which is most clearly identified with Kant.

It might seem out of place, even perverse, an illustration of an inability to learn from the debate, to feature, if not idealism as a whole, at any rate types of idealism. Idealism, which was initially given a powerful formulation in Platonism (the old way of ideas), and was then given another important formulation in Kant and then later in post-Kantian German idealism, especially Hegel, was still dominant in Britain around the turn of the twentieth century. But it has been out of favor ever since, especially in English-speaking lands. It has been supposedly thoroughly refuted, especially in the Marxist and the ana-

lytic discussions, and left to die a natural death. Though idealism is easy to argue against, even to lampoon, it is more difficult to grasp it other than superficially; and, on scrutiny, idealism is surprisingly resilient. Idealism can be criticized, but it is less clear that it has ever been convincingly defeated. It is even now making a surreptitious comeback in the widespread turn (or return) to Hegel.

There is an important difference between the many, often very different views classified as idealism and the currently widespread, often remarkably similar critical attitudes toward it. Though various idealist tendencies have been popular in the past, few observers now favor idealism, most are indifferent, and a vocal minority is currently actively hostile to it.

The anti-idealist hostility assumes various shapes. One of the main strategies employed by idealism's numerous opponents is to assume without argument the existence of idealism in general, an overlapping doctrinal commitment, a minimal shared position that all idealists of whatever kind supposedly accept. Yet this has never been described in a way corresponding to the positions of the main idealists. Since there is no such common doctrinal commitment, nor a shared series of principles, nor even an overlapping set of ideas to which all idealists are committed, it follows that, like the proverbial general triangle, idealism as such, which is simply a figment of the critic's imagination, does not exist. One of the themes of this book is that one should not be opposed to or again favorably inclined toward idealism as a single doctrine, since there is none, but rather opposed to, or favorably inclined toward, one or another of the different forms of idealism.

The bad reasons for inveighing against idealism include ignorance about it, which is widespread; disinterest, which is rampant; and outright hostility, which is fortunately rare. Few of idealism's many critics actually go so far as to study the texts

they oppose in any detail. Bertrand Russell, who believed idealism was worthless, thought that Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy meant that "propositions may acquire truth by being believed."<sup>8</sup> Karl Popper, a more extreme example, went to great, indeed dismal, lengths to refute a series of thinkers, often of the first rank, including Plato, Hegel,<sup>9</sup> Marx and Marxism,<sup>10</sup> as well as Freud, a group of important thinkers about whom he seems finally to have known very little. Disinterest is illustrated by the fact that many current philosophers, perhaps because they are uninformed about other perspectives, are sufficiently convinced of the correctness of their favored approach simply to ignore alternatives. The widespread hostility toward other positions, a prominent feature of twentieth-century debates, especially among analytic thinkers,<sup>11</sup> includes simple lack of respect for other points of view, often on the assumption that a different approach could offer nothing, nothing at all—an assumption that is as widespread as it is lamentable.

Ignorance about idealism in its various manifestations sometimes leads to surprising results. One obvious example is the Marxist rejection of idealism, and by extension of philosophy of all kinds, in the name of materialism. After Hegel died in 1831, his followers divided roughly into right-wing, or politically conservative, and left-wing, or politically radical, groups, from which Marx and later on Marxism emerged. Marxism, in spite of claiming to speak in Marx's name, takes a very different attitude than he did toward Hegel, toward "idealism," and toward philosophy. Marx was knowledgeable about and critical of Hegel. On occasion, he defends ideas often remarkably close to Hegel's. It is arguable that Marx should be understood, not as leaving Hegel and philosophy behind, but rather as a German idealist whose theories build on, modify and extend Hegel's.<sup>12</sup> Marxism builds on Engels, however, whose grasp of philosophy was at best weak and simplistic. Though his views are often

conflated with Marx's, especially by Marxists, Engels—but not Marx—rejects Hegel, idealism, and philosophy.

Another equally obvious example is the paradox of the currently growing analytic turn (or return) to Hegel while still maintaining the analytic rejection of idealism in all its forms. Analytic thinkers, who, like Marxists, reject idealism as such, fail to distinguish among forms of idealism. The rejection of idealism, though central to all forms of Marxism, is neither central, nor even germane to analytic philosophy, though it played a key role in the rise of this movement in England. This was not at first the case. Frege, who is widely considered as the most important precursor of English analytic philosophy, even its inventor, devotes little attention to criticizing idealism, and, since he published in an idealist journal, may even have considered himself to be an idealist.<sup>13</sup> Yet the rejection of idealism, often by later analytic thinkers influenced by Frege, belongs to the founding acts of English analytic philosophy.

The English analytic rejection of Hegel began with the turn of Russell and Moore, the founding fathers of analytic philosophy in England, against what they took to be idealism in general, toward which they were for a short time favorable, in the course of rejecting British idealism. The analytic rejection of idealism, which has continued unabated over the intervening century, is as strong now as when it first took shape. Yet since no reputable observer denies that Hegel is an idealist thinker, and no one suggests his theories can be separated from his idealism, it is simply inconsistent to be interested in Hegel but opposed to any and all forms of idealism.

The ignorance about forms of idealism exhibited by its detractors is only partly dissipated by its defenders, both those who passively accept or even actively defend one or more idealist theories, and even those who try to defend idealism in general. To the best of my knowledge, no one has so far provided an ac-

ceptable statement of how various idealist theories fit together. This lack, which impedes a full and fair discussion of idealist approaches to knowledge on their merits, can be attributed to several factors. One is that, since there is no idealism as such, it can neither be discussed nor refuted with respect to a single overarching doctrinal commitment. That Moore tried to do just that undermines his attempted refutation of idealism in general. A second reason is that even the most impressive proponents of one or another form of idealism are often insufficiently informed about other, competing varieties. Thus Kant's rejection of Berkeley's position is motivated more by his annoyance at being compared to the Irish philosopher than by knowledge of the latter's theories. And even when proponents of one or another form of idealism are well informed about others, as Hegel is deeply cognizant of Kant's position, they tend, as Hegel does, to focus on working out their own theoretical alternative as opposed to speculating on the comparative merits of an idealist approach in a more general manner.

The absence of any generally satisfying account of the different varieties of idealism is not in itself a sufficient motive to be interested in the theme, except for the fact that forms of idealism are widely understood as some of the most important philosophical tendencies in modern times. Another reason concerns the viability, if not of idealism as such, at least of one or more of its varieties. About a century ago, Croce famously asked what is living and what is dead in Hegel's thought.<sup>14</sup> This question can usefully be put to forms of idealism. If there is no idealism as such, then it can be neither defeated nor vindicated. At most, one can defend only types of idealism, though even that is a difficult task, not possible for some of its forms, not plausible for others.

There seems no point in pretending that all theories that fall under the heading of idealism are equally cogent or worthy of

scrutiny. Rather than extolling or condemning types of idealism, or idealism in general, it needs to be shown which, if any, of its main forms are worth defending at this time.

In the discussion to follow, I will identify three main idealist approaches to knowledge, while excluding a fourth. The idealist theories I will be examining include Platonism (the old way of ideas), the new way of ideas that arose in the seventeenth century, and German idealism specifically understood as including Kant. The type of idealism I will not be discussing in detail is precisely the one which has attracted the most attention from analytic thinkers, but which I think is the least significant, namely British idealism, also sometimes called British Hegelianism. British idealism looms large for its analytic critics, who, on the basis of their rejection of this tendency, feel justified in rejecting idealism of any kind. I will be suggesting on the contrary that British idealism does not reach the level of a unified approach to knowledge, idealist or otherwise, and that it mainly forms a unified movement in the eyes of its analytic critics.

I will be calling Platonism the approach to knowledge based on the theory of ideas, which is routinely but perhaps incorrectly attributed to Plato. Platonism is distinguished by two main doctrinal commitments: an acceptance of metaphysical realism and a rejection of representationalism. By “metaphysical realism” I will have in mind what Peirce called ontological metaphysics.<sup>15</sup> This includes many different versions of the familiar idea, which goes back in the tradition until early Greek philosophy, that, under proper conditions, it is possible to reliably claim to know mind-independent objects as they in fact are and indeed the mind-independent world, not only as it appears, but as it is. By “representationalism” I will have in mind the approach to knowledge based on the claimed relation between ideas in the mind and metaphysical reality. Representationalism in all its forms is a leading way to make a claim to know,



where “to know” means to grasp the way the mind-independent world really is beyond its mere appearance. The difference is that, unlike Platonism, which claims to grasp reality directly, a representational theory of knowledge claims to do so indirectly through one or more representations.

The new way of ideas is the movement arising in the seventeenth century, which includes the continental rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and others) and the British empiricists (Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and others). The new way of ideas—new by comparison to Platonism, by implication the old way of ideas—reverses the Platonic rejection of representationalism while maintaining without change a similar commitment to metaphysical realism. Though there is uncertainty on this point, since Plato’s texts present different epistemological models, and we do not know and cannot now determine which if any approach he himself favored, in the *Republic* he describes a model based on direct intuition of the mind-independent real. This approach to knowledge as immediate is rejected in the new way of ideas in favor of an anti-Platonic model of knowledge mediated by ideas, thoughts, or representations in the mind. In general, for the new way of ideas to know is to know the way the world is, not directly, but indirectly through ideas, which are said to represent, or depict, what is as it is.

The third type of idealism with which I shall be concerned is German idealism, by which I will have in mind the tradition inaugurated by Kant, and which is generally understood to include Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and, according to some accounts, Hölderlin as well.<sup>16</sup> A particularity of my approach is that, for reasons to be given below, I will be arguing that Marx should also be included within the German idealist fold. Again speaking broadly, German idealism is marked by an increas-

ing rejection of metaphysical realism and representationalism in favor of empirical realism and epistemological constructivism.

The interpretation of Kant has generated an enormous and still rapidly growing debate within which a consensus has not yet emerged. I believe Kant is committed simultaneously to different, incompatible approaches to knowledge. On the one hand, and despite the many critical things he says about such predecessors as Locke, Berkeley, and to a lesser extent Hume, he remains committed to the new way of ideas, including, by implication, metaphysical realism,<sup>17</sup> and, since he also inconsistently rejects immediate knowledge, to epistemological representationalism. But since he also rejects metaphysical realism in favor of empirical realism, he is committed as well to constructivism, which is incompatible with and irreducible to representationalism of any kind.

German idealism and constructivism are related but distinct doctrines. There are idealist and, according to usual classificatory schemes, nonidealist forms of constructivism. The latter include the theories of Hobbes, Vico, Herder, W. von Humboldt, Cassirer, Dewey, the later Wittgenstein, and perhaps Sellars, Fleck, Kuhn, and others. The term “constructivism,”<sup>18</sup> which Kant never uses, occurs in a wide variety of fields, including international relations,<sup>19</sup> mathematics,<sup>20</sup> art and architecture,<sup>21</sup> and so on. It will be used here in a narrow sense to designate a single important strand central to the German idealist version of the tangled idealist web. By “constructivism” I will have in mind the central insight in what has come to be known as Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy, also sometimes called Kant’s Copernican turn. Constructivism is the view that a necessary condition of knowledge is that the knower construct, constitute, make, or produce its cognitive object as a necessary condition of knowledge.

Metaphysical realism is a natural, but naïve normative view of knowledge, which manifests an attitude spread widely throughout philosophical and even nonphilosophical approaches to knowledge. This view, which has shown a remarkable ability to attract adherents since it was first formulated in ancient Greece, and which is still popular at present, should be rejected in all its many forms. If one gives it up, then, in avoiding skepticism one arrives at the other main alternative, the best view we currently have, which is exemplified in Kant's famous dictum that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own . . ." <sup>22</sup> This dark saying provides crucial insight into a constructivist strategy for knowledge. I believe Kant's version of constructivism is mistaken, but that the basic insight is a crucial contribution to a satisfactory approach to knowledge. I will be devoting a lot of space to trying to make sense of Kantian constructivism as an approach to theory of knowledge in the context of German idealism. Under Kant's influence, constructivism in various forms runs throughout the German idealist tradition and is further taken up by numerous later thinkers.

Since Kant is key to making sense, if not of idealism, at least of one of its main variants, he will be discussed in more detail than other figures. Yet the main emphasis will not be on Kant, but rather on identifying a viable idealist approach to the problem of knowledge. Now as in Kant's time, the main task is to return to the issues which motivated Kant and the post-Kantians. There is no reason to return to orthodox Kantianism, but there is real interest in returning to problems which motivated him with an eye to understanding what it would take to complete the Kantian philosophy in spirit, if not in letter. <sup>23</sup>

Since Kant has been studied in enormous detail in a huge literature, it will be useful to indicate the limits of the present study. The main emphasis here will be on problems and not on people. In describing Kant's position, I will be mainly con-

centrating on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which set a series of specific problems and more generally a larger agenda for post-Kantian German idealists and other thinkers.<sup>24</sup> Kant continued to work on his position even after the third *Critique* through the *Opus Postumum*. Since this part of his work either influenced the immediately following German idealist debate less or was not published and hence not known during his lifetime, it will not be discussed here. For the same reason, I will pass up the occasion to delve into the relation between romanticism and idealism in the writings of Hölderlin, Novalis, F. Schlegel, and others. Their views, which belong at least distantly to the development of German idealism, arguably fall outside the scope of an effort to determine if Kantian and post-Kantian forms of constructivism contribute to understanding the problem of knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

The treatment of Kantian constructivism will be distinctly non-Kantian, even anti-Kantian. Kant, who believes it possible to elucidate the conditions of the possibility of knowledge in the most general sense, presupposes a distinction in kind between philosophy and the history of philosophy that is widely implicit and is sometimes explicitly drawn even today. Quine speaks for many in his reported distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy.<sup>26</sup> This attitude suggests that the theoretical questions of philosophy and the practical questions of life can be solved once and for all. I hold on the contrary that in natural science as well as in philosophy theories are meaningful not in themselves but in respect to other, rival theories, to which they serve as alternatives in a given time and place. In what follows I will be treating the various aspects of the Kantian theme as if there were no difference between philosophy and the history of philosophy. The result, to be sure, will be different from anything Kant ever dreamed of, but in proceeding in this way it will be possible to take the measure of Kant's contribu-

tion while carrying his theories beyond the place at which he left them.

Kant is crucial here for two reasons. First, and despite Kant's conscious concern with transcendental argument, as opposed to historical discussion, the main idealist movements (that is, Platonism; the new way of ideas; and German idealism) all come together in his thought. In this respect as in many others, Kant is a mediating link, located at the confluence between the old and the new, at the high point of the preceding tradition and through his enormous and continuing influence at the origin of a number of main movements that arose in his wake.

Kant's infrequently discussed debt to the old way of ideas is very deep. As his famous remark about knowing Plato better than he knew himself<sup>27</sup> indicates, Kant is indebted to his great Greek predecessor on many levels. The critical philosophy is in many ways a form of "deep" Platonism, in which Platonic problems and solutions are rethought on a profound level, and in which Platonic concepts reappear in a modern critical guise. Long ago Cassirer pointed out that through his categories Kant put the Platonic ideas into the mind.<sup>28</sup> Many further observations of this kind could also be made.

Kant's further link to the new way of ideas, which was well known to and discussed by his contemporaries, was later mainly forgotten.<sup>29</sup> Most observers detect discontinuities between the critical philosophy and the new way of ideas, if for no other reason than the often sharp objections Kant raises against Descartes, Locke, and Berkeley, as well as between the new ways of ideas and idealism. The two counterclaims, viz., that the new way of ideas is idealist, and that Kant's position should be regarded as a further development of this tendency, need to be argued separately. It needs to be shown whether the new way of ideas is idealist in any important sense. It further needs to be shown that Kantian idealism and that form of idealism illus-

trated by the new way of ideas overlap. To bring out this convergence, I will be arguing that both the new way of ideas and Kant in some of his moods converge around a representationalist approach to knowledge.

Kant's influence on later German idealism can scarcely be denied and seems never to have been challenged. At the heart of Kant's position lies the Copernican revolution in philosophy. The literature on Kant is already vast and rapidly growing; it is now probably beyond the capacity of even the most industrious scholar to read more than selected items in the Kant debate. Yet Kant's Copernicanism, which can be abbreviated as his version of a constructivist approach to knowledge, has arguably still not received the attention it deserves in the discussion, even in recent contributions.<sup>30</sup> It is also widely misunderstood. Robert Hanna, for instance, regards Kant's Copernicanism as compatible with and completing his representationalism,<sup>31</sup> but I will show in some detail that Kant's Copernicanism is incompatible with and based on the abandonment of his representationalism.

Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy, whose existence is still debated, was well known to his contemporaries, including Reinhold, F. Schlegel, and others, and influential in the debate when he was active. Under Kant's influence, constructivism runs like a red thread through all later German idealist approaches to knowledge. Later German idealist efforts to extend and complete the critical philosophy minimize and eliminate metaphysical realism, hence representationalism, while reformulating and extending Kantian constructivism in new and different ways, ways different from and obviously incompatible with anything he seems to have intended.

Kant's Copernican turn lies at the heart of Kant's contribution to the problem of knowledge. If later German idealism is an effort to reformulate, carry further, and realize Kant's critical philosophy, then at its epicenter lies the effort by many

hands, including some of the greatest thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition, to present an acceptable version of Kant's constructivist insight. To elucidate the relation between idealism and constructivism will shed light on the central idea underlying Kant's entire investigation into the very possibility of knowledge. In better understanding Kant's critical philosophy, we will better understand what he contributes to the problem of knowledge. I will be arguing that Kant is correct about the need to turn to constructivism, but his own concept of it was later superseded by more interesting reconstructions which arose in his wake.

The importance of constructivism as a potentially viable approach to theory of knowledge cannot be overestimated. As concerns the contemporary debate on knowledge, it is unquestionably the single most important conceptual resource of the German idealist movement. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Otto Liebmann launched the slogan "Back to Kant!"<sup>32</sup> Unlike Liebmann, I do not intend to inspire a return to the critical philosophy, since under the influence of Liebmann and many others that has long since taken place, but rather to call attention to its constructivist dimension.

Constructivism, though not necessarily under that heading, is widely popular at present. In different ways, and mainly without any gestures toward the prior tradition, it is being featured in extremely diverse parts of the debate. Many philosophers of science (such as Rudolf Carnap, Nelson Goodman, Ludwik Fleck, Thomas Kuhn, Harry Collins, Andrew Pickering, David Bloor, Barry Barnes, Bruno Latour, and Steve Woolgar) take a generally constructivist approach to science. Each of them argues in different ways that scientific facts are not uncovered or discovered but, as Ludwik Fleck contends, made, or constructed.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, and from a very different angle of vision, a number of key feminist thinkers (e.g., Simone

de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Helen Longino, Gayatri Spivak, Naomi Scheman, and Hélène Moussa) take a constructivist approach in subscribing to related versions of Beauvoir's notorious pronouncement that one is not born but rather becomes a woman.<sup>34</sup> Those working in the emerging field of race theory deny essentialist claims of a biological foundation in favor of a social constructivist conception of race, including population geneticists (L. L. Cavalli-Sforza) and biological evolutionists (S. J. Gould). Finally, a number of psychiatrists (Thomas Szasz, R. D. Laing) and social historians cum philosophers (Michel Foucault) converge on the idea of mental illness, or even child abuse (Ian Hacking),<sup>35</sup> as a social construct.

Though by no means exhaustive, this restricted list gives a sense of the enormous scope of constructivism. Its already widely flung representatives are continuing to apply variations on a constructivist approach to ever more varied phenomena. In making the case for constructivist epistemology, it will be useful to retrace the genesis of its role in the philosophical debate by discussing how and why it emerged in the modern discussion. It is only when this has been done that we will be in a position to argue that and why constructivism is an integral part of any effort to resolve the problem of knowledge at the present time.

The book opens in the first chapter with a frankly revisionary effort to clarify the nature of idealism and to identify some of its main strands. Most writers who oppose idealism, and all those who consider it as a unified, homogeneous movement, with a single doctrinal commitment, know very little about it. I will be arguing that representatives of the so-called new way of ideas, including rationalists, British empiricists, and Kant, should all be considered as belonging to the idealist camp. Attention will be drawn to important differences between forms of idealism. The reader should come away with two ideas: first, what is routinely called idealism is simply misdescribed as a single, mono-



lithic movement; and, second, various forms of idealism constitute a complex series of disparate, only partially intersecting doctrines.

The second chapter provides a sketch of Kant's Copernican turn. It will argue that Kant's constructivism originates in his reaction to Copernican astronomy, that it is a leading idea in his conception of the philosophy of science, and that it is the basis of his own mature theory of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's position harbors a deep tension in virtue of his dual commitment to incompatible theories of representationalism and constructivism. The project Kant outlines in the famous Herz letter is representationalist. Yet the solution he proposes for the problem of knowledge is not representationalist but constructivist. Kant's constructivism is incompatible with, and presupposes a refutation of, the representationalism he shares with other representatives of the new way of ideas.

The third chapter will review some main criticisms of idealism. This includes intra-idealist critiques opposing proponents of some forms of idealism to proponents of other forms of idealism, and extra-idealist critiques conducted from a vantage point external to idealism of any kind. Kant's multiple refutations of idealism from the perspective of his own idealism will be considered in detail. Special attention will be devoted to the extra-idealist critiques of specific forms of idealism by Marxists, and of idealism in general by Anglo-American analytic thinkers.

Post-Kantian German idealism corrects Kant's a priori theories in an a posteriori, resolutely anthropological direction, initially in rethinking the subject, and later in adding contextualist, relativist and historicist dimensions to a constructivist approach to knowledge. The fourth chapter describes some of these developments while arguing that they do not constitute corruptions of, but rather improvements on, Kant's form of constructivism.

## I

# Idealism, Platonic Idealism, and the New Way of Ideas

Though Kant claims to be a transcendental idealist, both “transcendental idealism” and “idealism” need to be explained. What is “idealism”? It is only through answering this deceptively simple question that we can identify forms of idealism and the idealists who illustrate them. If meaning is determined by use, then the answer to the question of the meaning of “idealism” must be whatever those who claim to be idealists, who write about idealism, or who are thought to fall under the general heading of idealism say it is. There is no general agreement about “idealism,” however, and opinions about it differ widely. According to N. K. Smith, this term refers to “all those philosophies which agree in maintaining that spiritual values have a determining voice in the ordering of the universe.”<sup>1</sup> A. C. Ewing, who believes there is no general agreement or clear-cut answer, differentiates five subtypes of idealism, starting with Berkeley.<sup>2</sup> M. F. Burnyeat distinguishes between Berkeley’s thesis (*esse est percipi*) and the admittedly vaguer thesis that everything is in some sense mental or spiritual.<sup>3</sup> For Robert Pippin, idealism is modernism.<sup>4</sup> One could easily multiply such references without detecting any general agreement about idealism as such.

In the absence of any agreement about the meaning of “idealism,” it seems best to turn to the texts. Like other philosophical tendencies, idealism requires careful study, mastery of the texts, and working through the problems they address. The present chapter will begin to describe idealism in order to get clearer about what “idealism” means or at least has been taken to mean.

## “IDEA,” “IDEAL,” AND “IDEALISM”

We can make a start toward answering the question about “idealism” with some remarks about vocabulary. The ways in which we ordinarily use words when we are not engaged in philosophy suggest an average, everyday manner of relating to the world and ourselves through language. According to Wittgenstein, when a word enters the language, meaning is determined by use, not by philosophical theories (which are so often wide of the mark).<sup>5</sup> Yet what if the way the word “idealism” entered the language were determined through philosophical use, that is, by a prior philosophical theory?

To say with Wittgenstein that meaning is determined by use is not to narrow the field very much if at all. For use can itself be determined by all kinds of things, such as government fiat, religious tradition, advertising campaigns, natural phenomena, and so on. There is simply no way to give an exhaustive list of real (or possible) influences on the use of words making up natural language, hence of their meanings. Nor can we suppose that different natural languages share similar meanings deriving from similar use in all times and places. Well known claims for linguistic universals do not sufficiently respect the enormous differences among natural languages. It is doubtful there is any equivalent grammatical device in Indo-European languages, or even one that is remotely similar to, say, the common sentence-final particle “*le*” in Mandarin Chinese.<sup>6</sup>

Ordinary usage and philosophical usage, which are usually distantly related, are sometimes even similar. To put the same point differently, philosophy can sometimes play a role *inter alia* among different factors influencing ordinary usage. In a number of modern European languages, ordinary usage seems to be influenced, even determined, by a dualistic philosophical theory routinely attributed to Plato, for example the French

term “*idée*,” which apparently appears as early as 1119, the German “*Idee*,” the English “*idea*,” and so on. In tacitly following Platonism, English-language dictionaries suggest that in ordinary usage “*idea*,” hence “*ideal*” and “*idealism*,” all refer to appearance as distinguished from reality, both to what exists in independence of the subject and to what ought to be as distinguished from what is.

In modern European languages, dictionaries invariably note that the term “*idealism*” is related to the Greek word “*idea*,” meaning form, appearance (as opposed to reality), species, kind, nature, and so on. The suppressed reference to Platonism manifest in ordinary language usage is concealed as soon as philosophy begins to refer to idealism. In philosophical practice, “*idealism*” has diverse, unrelated, or almost unrelated, meanings, which are incompatible, even sharply opposed, and which do not necessarily retain more than the most distant reference to Platonism. There are types of idealism, but there is not and never has been idealism as such, any more than because there are types of triangles there is a general triangle. It is further not clear how Platonism, that is, the theory, or group of theories supposedly illustrated by and rooted in Plato, in fact relates to his position, which cannot now be determined.

There is apparently no natural way of using “*idealism*,” which in philosophical contexts is used normatively or stipulatively, mainly with respect to claims to know. Those who consider themselves, or who are classed as, idealists often fail to clarify their understanding of this key term. Their opponents typically employ it very loosely and then mainly to designate anything they reject. Who is an idealist obviously depends on what one thinks idealism is. Kant’s rejection, not of idealism—that would be inconsistent with his position, since he claimed to be a transcendental idealist—but of “*bad*” idealism remains very influential among analytic thinkers. But his view of Descartes as an

idealist is not more widely shared than, say, Hegel's conception of Aristotle as a so-called false idealist.

The philosophical term "idealist" seems to have been invented by Leibniz. In responding to Bayle, he objects to "those who, like Epicurus and Hobbes, believe that the soul is material" and adds that in his own position "whatever of good there is in the hypotheses of Epicurus and Plato, of the great materialists and the great idealists, is combined here."<sup>7</sup> Leibniz' usage of the term implies that idealism and materialism differ, but can be combined in a single position. He suggests, as Fichte later appears to suggest, a simultaneous commitment to idealism and materialism (or realism).<sup>8</sup> Most observers regard materialism (or realism) and idealism as incompatible, hence believe that a simultaneous commitment to both would be self-contradictory. The view that no version of idealism and materialism (or realism) can be combined within a single position is common to objections brought against idealism in different ways by its Marxist and analytic critics.

In philosophical contexts "idealism" is used to refer to an implausibly broad variety of disparate positions associated with numerous important figures widely scattered throughout the Western philosophical tradition. There is no way to draw up a complete list without identifying a standard of what counts as idealism. An incomplete list, which suffices to indicate how many important figures have been associated with idealism and idealist movements, might include: Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, the Cambridge Platonists (Ralph Cudworth, John Smith, Benjamin Whichcote, Nathaniel Culverwell, Henry More, and others), Berkeley, the German idealists (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, perhaps Hölderlin, perhaps even Marx), the British idealists (S. T. Coleridge, J. F. Ferrier, T. H. Green, Edward Caird, F. H. Bradley, J. M. E. McTaggart, Bernard Bosanquet

and so on), the Italian Hegelians (Giovanni Gentile, Benedetto Croce, and so on), R. G. Collingwood, Edmund Husserl, on some interpretations Heidegger, even Ludwig Wittgenstein who is sometimes understood as a linguistic idealist,<sup>9</sup> Carnap, and perhaps Donald Davidson who is also linked to linguistic idealism.

Idealism was very popular in early nineteenth-century Germany and in later nineteenth-century England. But it later fell into disrepute as a result of unremitting attack by Marxists in the second half of the nineteenth century and then by analytic writers throughout the entire twentieth century. Though some are still mining the idealist conceptual vein, few philosophers are currently willing to accept the term as descriptive of their own positions. In twentieth-century America, exceptions include personalists such as B. P. Bowne and P. A. Bertocci; American pragmatists like C. S. Peirce and John Dewey (but emphatically not William James, who did much to encourage the reaction against idealism of any kind); Josiah Royce, an important thinker as well as an important scholar of German idealism; Brand Blanshard, a kind of British idealist on American soil; and, at present, Nicholas Rescher, whose complex position reflects idealist, pragmatist and analytic influences.<sup>10</sup>

#### IDEALISM OR TYPES OF IDEALISM?

To come to grips with, to read carefully, to assess and to criticize a philosophical tendency, one must obviously know what it is, what it is not, where its limits lie; understand its main doctrinal commitments; and have a sense of whether and how it differs from what its critics say about it, as well as of what its self-professed enthusiasts, or designated adherents, have in common. In part the difficulty in evaluating "idealism" lies in

knowing what is meant by the term as well as by related terms such as “Platonic idealism,” “German idealism,” “British idealism,” and so on.

Even when judged by the usually low philosophical standards, accounts of idealism appear surprisingly confusing and confused. Observers disagree among themselves and there is a frequent tendency to conflate idealism with German idealism. According to Rüdiger Bubner, who is thinking specifically of German idealism, the term “Idealism bears its name because ideas are key to solving the task of conclusively aligning the metaphysical doctrine put forth by reason with what is evident in self-consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> Frederick Beiser, who is also concerned with the same movement, argues that the period from 1781 to 1801 was interested in moving away from subjectivity,<sup>12</sup> by implication to maintain a distance from philosophical anthropology that Heidegger sees as typical of the modern tradition.<sup>13</sup> For Karl Ameriks, the problem of the meaning of “idealism” is central to German idealism.<sup>14</sup> These (and many other) proposed ways of understanding German idealism are dissimilar, sometimes incompatible, and further tend to conflate an understanding of German idealism, which is at most only a prominent form of idealism, with idealism in general.

Some observers have tried to identify a feature common to all, or at least most, main forms of idealism. The focus on what forms of idealism have in common suggests they are variations on a single main theme, such as a single doctrinal commitment. The main form of this strategy, which goes back to Kant, is later worked out by idealism’s Marxist and analytic critics. Kant depicts “bad” idealism, illustrated by Descartes and Berkeley, as a failed epistemological doctrine, whose failure lies in the rejection of the appropriate form of realism, more specifically the reality or again the existence of the external world.<sup>15</sup> He is later followed on this point by G. E. Moore.

This line of argument is independently applied to idealism in general in related ways by its Marxist and analytic critics. Following Engels, Marxism suggests that idealism eschews the real for an ideological construction, in a word by substituting the apparently real for the real. In Moore's wake, analytic philosophy claims that idealism of whatever kind simply denies the existence of the external world. These complaints are two forms of the same view that idealism fails to come to grips with, or even to acknowledge the existence of, the real external world. Idealism, from this angle of vision, denies realism, or the existence of the real. Yet idealism cannot be satisfactorily depicted in terms of a supposed opposition to realism. Kant, who originally raises this complaint against selected forms of idealism, offers an outstanding counterexample to any effort to extend his objection to idealism in general. His critical philosophy is committed to transcendental idealism and empirical realism, hence to a form of realism. It follows that idealism cannot be understood merely through its alleged opposition to realism. At most, some forms of idealism are opposed to some forms of realism.

No one has ever satisfactorily identified a common idealist position, that is, a univocal set of doctrinal commitments shared by all idealists, or even so much as a single significant idealist characteristic which applies to all those who claim to be or are considered to be idealists. No one has ever shown that all forms of idealism, or even all main forms, are variations on a single theme. There is no idealism as such, and it is not even clear there is anything like a family resemblance among those who regard themselves as or are considered to be idealists. At most, there are only idealists, who defend different theories that typically are, or at least reasonably might be, described as forms of idealism.

Idealism in general therefore cannot be either described or criticized. At best, we can describe and criticize alleged forms of



idealism, aware, however, that there is no secure way of identifying what it is that they are supposedly forms of, or what it is to which they can with confidence be held to relate. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to identifying and describing some main forms of idealism.

### PLATONIC IDEALISM

Platonic idealism emerged early in the Western philosophical tradition. Plato's influence on later Western philosophy can scarcely be overestimated. If, as Whitehead famously claims, the history of Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato,<sup>16</sup> then if Plato is an idealist, Western philosophy is a series of variations on the idealist theme first prominently sounded, perhaps even invented, in Plato's position.

The claim for Platonic idealism stands or falls with the theory of ideas ordinarily attributed to Plato<sup>17</sup> and, since Leibniz, identified with idealism.<sup>18</sup> Many observers, both students of Plato, and such important later thinkers as Kant,<sup>19</sup> routinely attribute the notorious theory of ideas to Plato. Everything about this theory, including its existence as well as its attribution to Plato, is controversial. Plato simply never identifies himself with any of the philosophical claims he examines in his dialogues. We also do not know, and there is no prospect of now determining, what, if any, position Plato defends or even regards as promising. We also do not know that he is committed to the so-called theory of ideas. We do not even know there is such a theory, about whose existence scholars continue to differ. Yet since early Greek philosophy, most prominently in Aristotle, and over the intervening centuries many of Plato's readers have routinely claimed to find what is widely known as the theory of ideas in his texts and even to identify it with Plato's own position.<sup>20</sup>

The line of argument identified as the theory of ideas apparently centers on an effort to take a median position between materialism, identified with the Sophists for whom the real is limited to body, or to the visible, and the very radical Eleatic view according to which the true reality of the Sophists is no more than “a moving process of becoming”<sup>21</sup> in the eyes of those who are referred to as the “friends of the forms.”<sup>22</sup> If, in referring to the friends of the forms, Plato is not referring to his own circle, but rather, as seems likely, to the Eleatics, then he does not invent but rather only adapts an earlier version of the theory of ideas as a median position between the extremes in the battles of gods and giants which began earlier between the defenders of materialism and the defenders of ideas.

Some observers detect traces of the theory of ideas throughout the Platonic corpus. It is accepted in current Platonic scholarship that this theory is first referred to in the *Symposium*; then stated, argued, and defended in the *Phaedo*; expounded and applied in the *Republic*; mentioned in the *Timaeus* and in the *Philebus*; and subjected to very thorough criticism in the *Parmenides*. In the *Phaedo*, where Plato examines the question of the immortality of the soul, a concept (or idea) is said to be immutable, timeless, unitary (or one over many), and knowable in virtue of its status as a mind-independent thing. Many passages in Plato's writings appear to refer to different versions of a doctrine that is often abbreviated as one over many. They include passages in the *Republic* (596A) where it is said that there is one idea for each type of object in the *Hippias Major* (287CD) where it is suggested that good things are good because of the Good; in the *Phaedo* where it is said that beautiful things are beautiful because they participate in the Beautiful (100C); and in the *Parmenides* (132DE) where it is suggested that things which participate in the same idea resemble each other in this respect.

Idealism or forms of idealism are frequently linked to realism,

which often serves as a conceptual standard to criticize idealism. There are many different forms of realism, such as ordinary realism, roughly the belief of the ordinary person that we in fact know the world as it is; metaphysical realism, which provides a sophisticated philosophical statement of ordinary realist claims to know the world as it really is as distinguished from the way it merely appears; scientific realism, which is held to be a privileged epistemological means to uncover or reveal the world as it is; and empirical realism, which limits claims to know to what is given in experience without any further claims about what lies outside it.

The theory of ideas attributed to Plato, which illustrates a form of metaphysical realism, is regarded as a way to reliably claim to know the mind-independent real lying beyond appearance as it is. Understood in this way, Platonism commits Plato to what can be called Platonic realism according to which to know is to uncover, to discover or to reveal the mind-independent external world, or what is as it is in independence from us, or, as it is often said, in independence from mind.

Forms of this doctrine, which apparently preexists Plato, can be detected in such thinkers as Parmenides. We recall that the “Way of Truth” begins with the striking claim “That which is, is, and cannot not be,” which leads directly to a conception of knowledge as the grasp of the mind-independent real. This claim is routinely construed as asserting realistic premises underlying the “Way of Truth” according to which the real must be that which can be thought and known, and is necessarily one.<sup>23</sup>

In working out his position, Plato seems to have been influenced by concerns about objectivity, or objective cognition, in such domains as science, mathematics, and what we now call ethics as the answer to questions earlier pursued through

elenchic disputation. The commitment to a realm of mind-independent but knowable reality yields a theory of knowledge as well as a particular political approach culminating in the idea of a philosopher-king justified through the alleged possession of a special cognitive capacity providing for a direct, intuitive grasp of reality.

The Greek word *idea*, which is usually translated as “form” or “idea,” and which is derived from *idein*, “to see,” means the “look of a thing,” as opposed to its reality, or to its kind, sort, or nature. Through different versions of this theory, Plato appears to identify cognitive objects of mind, which are beyond the changing world of appearances, hence really are, and which, as eternal, or unchanging, neither come into being nor pass away. A minimal, “average” statement of the view routinely attributed to Plato includes two claims: first, the epistemological conviction that we know and only can know a particular because of a universal, or what is now also called universal predication; and, second, the related ontological belief that there are particulars only because of the causal relation to a universal, as in the well-known example of a carpenter with an idea of a bed in book 10 of the *Republic*.

In part because Plato seems never to have arrived at a definitive version of a theory he perhaps did not accept, there are many puzzles about and problems with the Platonic theory of ideas. There is ambiguity about what claims this theory defends. Scholars point to a difference between ideas as universals, as in the later concern with the problem of universals, and ideas as perfect examples (or paradigms). Thus in the *Republic* (596A) Plato talks about assuming there is only one form in the case of many particulars. But in the *Parmenides* (132D) he treats the forms as paradigms, or perfect exemplars of which things are merely copies. Aristotle, who criticizes the latter form of the

theory, famously raises the difficulty of understanding the idea of participation (*methexis*), namely how things participate in, or are caused by, forms or ideas.<sup>24</sup>

The theory of ideas is the centerpiece of the collection of doctrines known as Platonism, whose influence extends throughout Western philosophy from Plato's day until the present. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Platonic idealism is its attribution to Plato.<sup>25</sup> The case for Platonic idealism rests on the identification of a theory of ideas routinely attributed to Plato and, since Leibniz, identified as idealism. In a word, to accept the existence of the theory of ideas is to accept Platonic idealism, and, conversely, to doubt the existence of Platonic idealism requires one to doubt that there is a theory of ideas. While there is considerable doubt that Plato subscribed to this doctrine, at least in any form with which we are now familiar, there is widespread agreement about the existence of a theory of ideas that many continue to identify with Plato and which all observers regard as idealistic.

The conjunction of epistemology and ontology in ancient Greek philosophy is later dissolved in the modern turn away from ancient ontology, which, however, preserves much of the epistemological side of this doctrine. The Platonic realism invoked by the theory of ideas is maintained in the modern link between realism and knowledge. Platonism is associated with a strong, ontological form of realism, or the claim to know what is as it is, in short a claim to knowledge of the mind-independent world. The Platonic assertion of the independent existence of a concept, idea, or form in relation to things leads to a normatively metaphysical realist view of knowledge as a grasp of what is as it is, or cognition of the mind-independent external world, which, since ancient Greek philosophy, continues to be the leading view of what it means to know.

A similar normative view is important in many epistemo-

logical domains, including mathematics, physics (and science in general), and philosophy. Like Gottlob Frege before him, Kurt Gödel, for instance, was a mathematical Platonist, who insisted on the independence of numbers. Stephen Weinberg, the physicist, disagrees with Thomas Kuhn in claiming that natural science would be an irrational enterprise if we did not actually succeed in knowing the mind-independent real.<sup>26</sup> In philosophy, this conviction leads to the familiar view of knowledge as a grasp of what is as it is, which, in neo-Cartesian, appropriately modern form, is widely defended today by numerous contemporary analytic thinkers, including Donald Davidson, Robert Nozick, Thomas Nagel, Michael Devitt, John McDowell, Robert Brandom, Richard Rorty, and Hilary Putnam. Putnam, who is a leading contemporary realist, has defended different forms of realism over many years. These include scientific realism, according to which science and only science tells us what is;<sup>27</sup> also internal realism, or the view that our different theories provide alternative interpretations of the mind-independent real;<sup>28</sup> and more recently a direct, or natural, realism in which we supposedly grasp the world as it is without any intervening representation.<sup>29</sup>

#### THE NEW WAY OF IDEAS AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONALISM

With the exception of Platonic idealism, which arises early in ancient philosophy, idealism's other main forms emerge only much later in the modern tradition. Platonism, which relies on the direct, intuitive grasp of the real, is antirepresentational, opposed to the view that one can go from the world of appearance to the world of reality, or from "appearances" to ideas. The second main form of idealism, widely known as the new way of ideas, is anti-Platonic and representational.

Representationalism, which the new way of ideas exemplifies, does not originate with modern philosophy; it was already present in ancient Greek philosophy. In criticizing various forms of art, Plato rejects epistemological representationalism of any kind as even potentially a reliable indicator of mind-independent reality. Plato specifically claims, in referring to mind-independent reality, that we cannot correctly represent what is; rather, he suggests, we can only know, if indeed we can know at all, through direct, immediate grasp of the real by means of cognitive intuition. Platonic idealism offers a very simple analysis of knowledge in terms of the cognitive relation of the subject to a mind-independent cognitive object. A representational theory of perception interpolates a third element, or representation, between the subject and the mind-independent cognitive object. In a representational theory of perception, objects are said to be cognized indirectly through representations of mind-independent objects. A theory of knowledge is representational if and only if it holds that all access to the real, mind-independent external is through ideas in the mind. For a representationalist, to know is not to know the object directly but rather to directly know the representation, which, it is held, correctly depicts the cognitive object.<sup>30</sup>

A representational approach to knowledge is pervasive in continental rationalism, English empiricism, in Kant, and in contemporary analytic philosophy. Representationalism, which was revived as early as Descartes, has been a main strategy for knowledge throughout the entire modern era. Representationalism is featured in rationalists like Descartes, in empiricists like Locke, and in general throughout the new way of ideas. It is also in part featured in Kant. Representationalism is as popular now as it has ever been. In different ways, it is defended by many contemporary analytic thinkers, including Nagel, Davidson, and Brandom. Putnam, who in this respect is typical, in his internal

realist phase featured an ongoing effort, common to many contemporary theorists of knowledge, but which he later gave up, to depict knowledge as a series of different theories about the same mind-independent external world. He and many others still cling to the traditional belief that under the proper circumstances they can reliably represent the mind-independent world as it is.<sup>31</sup>

The anti-Platonic return to representationalism resulted from a revised conception of the term “idea.” In Platonism, an idea, or form, is an unchanging cognitive object. The concept of the Reichstag remains the same even when flames are lapping around the building. The view in the *Timaeus* of the forms as eternal and independent objects functioning as patterns for the demiurge was influential in later antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages. Through such thinkers as Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, and Montaigne, “idea” later came to mean “image” or “representation” often situated in the mind. By the time of Montaigne, “idea” apparently already meant “mental representation.”

One can easily argue that Descartes is an idealist since he anticipates the German idealist claim for the identity of thought and being in his famous slogan, “I think, therefore I am,” which is most easily construed as equating thought and being. Variations on this theme continue to reverberate through German idealism from Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy through post-Kantian German idealist identity theories, as well as Hegel’s and Marx’s views of self-objectification (and Marx’s view of alienation).

“Idea” is related to Cartesian idealism. There is much uncertainty about how to understand the term “idea” in Descartes, in later rationalism, and then in empiricism. According to Descartes, “idea” can be taken either “materially as an act of my understanding” or “it may be taken objectively as the



thing which is represented by this act . . .”<sup>32</sup> The Cartesian view of “idea” spans mathematical claims as well as adventitious thoughts neither innate nor formed by the subject,<sup>33</sup> which are defined as “images of the [external] things.”<sup>34</sup>

The influential Cartesian view of ideas has many critics. It is often said that Descartes uses the term “idea” inconsistently to refer to an operation or act, and to its content.<sup>35</sup> He introduces “idea” (*idée*) to mean “images of things.”<sup>36</sup> In answering Hobbes, he maintains this definition in denying he has an idea of God.<sup>37</sup> In the Preface to the *Meditations*, he responds to the objection that an idea I have might be more perfect than me. He answers that the term “idea,” which is “equivocal,” can be taken either “materially, as an act of my understanding” or “it may be taken objectively, as the thing which is represented by this act . . .”<sup>38</sup> Watson, who considers Descartes as the father of representationalism,<sup>39</sup> argues that he consistently conflates image and concept, as in the discussion of the two ideas of the sun in the third *Meditation*, of which one is acquired from the senses and the other through astronomical reasoning.<sup>40</sup> This type of objection was already raised before the book was in print. Hobbes complains that we could not have more than one idea of the sun at a time, and that Descartes conflates idea and rational inference.<sup>41</sup>

For our purposes, it is not necessary to sort out the proper interpretation of the Cartesian position. Suffice it to say that his important distinction between the use of “idea” to refer to concepts and to images of things identifies a basic difference between Platonism, or the old way of ideas, and modern representationalism, or the new way of ideas. The Platonic theory of ideas takes them as concepts, whereas the representational approach to perception that flourishes in modern times takes them in the first place as images of things. In running together the use of “idea” to refer to concepts and to things, Descartes con-

flates Platonism, which in this way enters into modernity and survives in his position, and the anti-Platonic, modern form of representationalism of which he is an early, distinguished representative.

Descartes' residual Platonism was mainly discounted; but his influential use of idea as an image of a thing, hence the representationalism following from it, was widely accepted. Those influenced by this Cartesian view include Pierre Gassendi and Thomas Hobbes, who were early readers and critics of his *Meditations*, such other rationalists as Spinoza and Leibniz, and, through Locke, the entire British empiricist tradition. Spinoza distinguishes between conception, in which the mind acts, and perception, in which it is acted upon. He defines an idea as a concept in the mind when one thinks.<sup>42</sup> And he famously claims that the order and connection of ideas and things is the same.<sup>43</sup> In the *Monadology* (*Monadologie*, 1714), on the basis of his conception of a preestablished harmony Leibniz maintains that each monad represents, or mirrors, the whole universe.<sup>44</sup> In the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (*Discours de métaphysique*, 1686), he further distinguishes between an idea understood as different thoughts about the same thing, and also as the object of thought, that is, as something permanent which remains unaltered whether or not one is thinking of it.<sup>45</sup>

A series of empiricists develop further versions of the representational approach to knowledge through ideas. Thus Locke asserts a later version of this theory in his view of simple ideas as necessarily true about the mind-independent external world. In response to Locke, Berkeley denies we can ever know how our ideas resemble the objects independent of them. He further maintains, as Reid also argues, that as soon as we distinguish between things and ideas of them we land in skepticism.<sup>46</sup> And Hume divides the contents of mind into impressions, or as he says, sensations, passions and emotions, and ideas. He claims

that the latter are merely fainter, less vivid copies of the former while denying that we can ever rationally infer to causal relations in the world.

Through the influence of Arnauld's *Port-Royal Logic* (*La Logique ou l'art de penser*, 1662) and Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), the term "idea" was gradually extended to mean literally any object of thought. Further complications were introduced by distinctions between innate, abstract, and concrete ideas. One difficulty is the confused discussion about innate ideas involving Descartes, Leibniz, Locke and others. A second difficulty lies in the distinction between abstract ideas, arrived at through abstraction, and concrete ideas. Locke took over the conception of abstract ideas in the *Port-Royal Logic*<sup>47</sup> as the basis of his own distinction between simple and complex ideas.

The "new way of ideas" is a term apparently coined by Bishop Stillingfleet in reference to John Toland's non-Cartesian way of using ideas, based on his reaction to Locke's *Essay*, in *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696).<sup>48</sup> I will be using the term "new way of ideas" in a widened sense to refer not only to Locke, but also to English empiricism in general as well as to continental rationalism. Understood in this way, the new way of ideas includes not only Descartes, perhaps the other continental rationalists, as well as the English empiricists, but also Kant, who substitutes the word "representation" (*Vorstellung*) for idea.

On the basis of the term "idea," no less than three distinct and contrasting epistemological theories arose. One, which we are accustomed to call the rationalist approach, finds its most important statement in Descartes. Descartes' familiar argument runs through a series of stages, including proof of his own existence, through proof of God's existence, then through the inference that, since God is no deceiver, clear and distinct ideas are true, and finally to the proof of material things.

A second theory, the familiar British empiricist approach, is distinctively formulated in Locke's *Essay*. Locke's statement that "the mind perceives nothing but its own ideas"<sup>49</sup> makes him out to be a representational realist about perception; but he has also been read as a skeptic, and some have recently read him as a direct realist.<sup>50</sup> Locke differentiates between simple ideas, which the mind cannot create, and complex ideas, or ideas composed out of simple ideas by the mind.<sup>51</sup> He claims that the latter, which are never wrong, directly grasp the mind-independent, empirical world.<sup>52</sup> According to this and related forms of English empiricism, complex ideas represent the world, which is indirectly, but unerringly known through simple ideas claimed in various ways to match up one-to-one so to speak with the world. Versions of this theory run throughout English empiricism and allied doctrines at least through the early Wittgenstein and even the early Carnap. Thus Wittgenstein typically asserts, but never demonstrates, that atomic ideas bear a one-to-one relation to atomic facts. And Carnap, supposedly following Wittgenstein, introduces the concept of protocol sentences (*Protokollsätze*) intended to weave a seamless web between experience and science.

Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism both deny that the mind comes into contact with the mind-independent world, contending that knowledge is mediated through ideas. For rationalism and empiricism, the world as it is is discovered (or uncovered) through our ideas of it. A third form of the representational theory of perception is developed by Kant. Kant's form of representationalism arises out of his critique of rationalism and English empiricism, but not empiricism as such, as well as his own positive attempt to solve the problem of knowledge. In his representationalism, Kant does not rely on the term "idea," which he understands in a closely Platonic, nonempirical way as transcending even the possibility of ex-

perience.<sup>53</sup> Kant's understanding of this crucial word sets him against all prior versions of the new way of ideas which, since Descartes, clearly understands ideas as images of things. In his form of the representationalist approach to knowledge, Kant relies on the term *Vorstellung*, correctly translated as "representation," but also sometimes rendered incorrectly as "presentation."<sup>54</sup>

Kant's unusually complex position includes more than one approach to knowledge. His "official" theory is a view widely ascribed to him, and which has been much discussed, but which is finally not promising, while his "unofficial" theory involves a second view, which is not often discussed, but which is influential in the post-Kantian German idealist discussion and remains very promising.

Kant's "official" theory analyzes cognition as a relation of a representation to the represented object, where "object" is understood in the traditional way as a mind-independent external thing which, in virtue of its ontological independence, is unaffected by our observation of it. Kant's term for object (*Gegenstand*) literally means what stands over against, or is opposed to (something). This Kantian view is clearly stated in an important letter to Marcus Herz (February 21, 1772), Kant's friend and former student, early in the critical period, when Kant was already at work on what was to become his mature position. In his letter, Kant succinctly formulates a single question, which will later lead to the critical philosophy, and will continue to occupy him throughout his writings: "What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' in the object?"<sup>55</sup>

This way of formulating the epistemological question presupposes a distinction between appearances and what they refer to, which is said to appear. In more technical terms, Kant relies on a triple distinction between phenomena (or what is immedi-

ately given in perceptual experience), appearances (or those phenomena which not only appear but also refer beyond themselves to what appears), and objects (understood as things in themselves, which are independent of, but supposedly made known to us through, their appearances). The main idea is that phenomena, or the contents of experience, are appearances through which we have access to the way the world is as it is in independence from us. As part of his analysis, Kant simply assumes, but does not show, that representations are distinct from, but enable us to cognize, independent objects. He further supposes without argument that there is a mind-independent external world, which we in fact know through its representation.

Kant's version of the representationalist approach to knowledge is continuous with other versions widely illustrated in the new way of ideas according to which we know the real world through the relation of ideas to things. This general approach rests on two key beliefs, which comprise Kant's own version of the new way of ideas: there is a mind-independent external world, and under appropriate conditions we in fact know it as it is through representations. Kant never wavered from his original twin beliefs in the existence and in knowledge of the external world. It is widely known that Kant admired Newton's achievement, which he regarded as proving a hypothesis earlier advanced by Copernicus. We have Kant's own testimony that one of his motives in working out the critical philosophy was to counter Hume's attack on causality, which can be interpreted as undermining the results of modern science, including Newtonian mechanics. It is sometimes noted that Kant's commitment to Newton requires him to refute Hume.

But, though his critical philosophy seems to have arisen out of his "official" concern to solve the problem of how representations relate to mind-independent objects, hence to a represen-

tational solution to the problem of knowledge, Kant later seems to have changed his mind about whether representations suffice to know the world as it is. In Kant's terminology, to know the world as it is is to know things in themselves, or noumena. Yet things in themselves, which can be thought, cannot be given in experience, hence cannot be known. Kant later came to believe that we cannot reliably claim to know mind-independent objects at all. Thus the "Refutation of idealism" added in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to which we shall return below, does not claim that we in fact know the external world through its representations. It rather claims that inner experience depends on outer experience, hence that the external world exists. In other words, it is intended to prove the existence of the world; but it does not prove, and does not even attempt to prove, that we know that world as it is.

It is easy to grasp the link between the new way of ideas and representationalism. The new way of ideas is representationalism, and representationalism is what the new way of ideas is about. It is more difficult to show the further link between the new way of ideas, understood as representationalism, and idealism. This connection, which is obviously controversial, is supported by three arguments.

The first argument is purely linguistic. Plato is credited with the discovery of the theory of ideas in ancient Greece. The term "new way of ideas" is intended to distinguish a modern conceptual tendency from an approach invented some two millennia earlier, or the old way of ideas. If a theory of knowledge based on ideas qualifies as idealism, and if the old way of ideas is idealism,<sup>56</sup> then *ceteris paribus* the new way of ideas is also idealism.

Second, there is the established practice of referring to the main continental rationalists, all of whom are committed to forms of representationalism, as idealists. Spinoza, as noted above, famously claims that the order and connection of ideas

and things is the same. Leibniz is also often understood as an idealist.

The third argument is based on Kant's efforts, in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to refute the "bad" idealism he attributes to Descartes and Berkeley. These thinkers, and in some of his moods Kant himself, approach the problem of knowledge through conceptions of ideas in the mind. Kant and Descartes, but not Berkeley, are both committed to representational approaches to epistemology.

If Kant is an idealist, and if epistemological representationism is idealism, then the new way of ideas also counts as idealism. This inference might seem odd, out of place, even bizarre. Attention is not now often drawn to the link between Kant and the new way of ideas for a number of reasons. These include Kant's strong critique of Descartes, his disparaging remarks about Locke, and the view that English empiricism is an important source of analytic philosophy, which is steadily opposed to idealism of any kind. Many scholars are skeptical about viewing Kant together with the exponents of the new way of ideas.<sup>57</sup> Yet attention was often drawn in Kant's day to the link between the critical philosophy and the new way of ideas. A number of Kant's contemporaries, such as Hamann, thought there was a straight line leading from Descartes, over Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, to the critical philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

Interpretation of the new way of ideas as idealism immediately changes our understanding of idealism in three ways. First, idealism is no longer an isolated tendency, but, in virtue of the widespread character of rationalism and above all empiricism, virtually everywhere in the modern tradition.

Second, the redescription of empiricism as idealism points to a link between the English analytic assault on idealism and the later widespread analytic critique of empiricism, the traditional English approach to knowledge, which has developed roughly



since the later Wittgenstein. Since analytic philosophy is closely related to traditional English empiricism, the analytic critique of empiricism might appear surprising. But it is less surprising when one recalls the obvious parallel between early analytic criticism of idealism and later analytic criticism of empiricism. It is as if analytic philosophy, which had always been directed against idealism, had suddenly discovered idealism in its midst. If English empiricism is assimilable to idealism, then an analytic thinker who rejects idealism must also reject the English form of empiricism.

Third, the claim that representationalism concerns a wide swath of modern philosophy suggests that on closer examination theories like idealism, empiricism, and rationalism, which are usually understood as sharply opposed, have a good deal in common. The usual way of reading the modern tradition features sharp distinctions between continental rationalism, English empiricism, and German idealism, movements ordinarily regarded as incompatible under any description. Sharp distinctions, which typically depict ideal theories, are only very rarely illustrated by any particular position, and tend to dissolve under scrutiny. I will be suggesting below that much of modern philosophy, encompassing positions and tendencies routinely regarded as incompatible and even unrelated, shares the commitment to different forms of a representational approach to knowledge.

Platonic idealism turns on the old way of ideas, or the view that an idea literally is, or is identical with, the mind-independent real. The new way of ideas is the view that the idea (or representation), which is not itself the real, rather stands in for it in providing the necessary cognitive link to the mind-independent real. In the old way of ideas, to know is to know an idea, which literally is the world. In the new way of ideas, to know is to know an idea, which is not the world, but which enables us to know

the world as it is. In the old way of ideas, the knower can be said to have direct knowledge of the world, while in the new way of ideas this knowledge is mediated through ideas, hence is never direct but always and necessarily indirect. It is worth noting, since idealism has often been criticized for providing a merely fanciful, politically devious view of the external world (Marxism) or even for denying its existence (analytic philosophy), that the old and the new way of ideas both rest their case for knowledge on the claim to know the mind-independent world not only as it appears but as it really is. There could hardly be a more direct contrast between the criticism of the view, which rests on a blatant distortion, and the view that its representatives in fact defend.

#### BERKELEYAN IDEALISM

Berkeley, who belongs to the later British empiricist reception of Locke, is a controversial, much-misunderstood figure, who is often denounced but more rarely even superficially studied.<sup>59</sup> The simplest way to describe Berkeley's reaction to Locke is to say that he rejects matter for immaterialism on the argument that matter is a gratuitous assumption, which, on strictly empirical grounds, cannot be perceived. Berkeley, who is a turning point in the history of idealist theories of knowledge, occupies a distinct niche in the idealist debate. He is widely, but incorrectly, regarded in the English-language discussion as the high point of idealism, and just as widely criticized on that account, since this is taken to be a low point of rational thought. But, though well known, he is not well understood, in part because he is little read; and his position is very different from that routinely attributed to him.

As concerns Berkeley, there is a before and after with respect to idealism. In response to Locke, he provides a general cri-

tique of all forms of epistemological representationalism running throughout the new way of ideas. Berkeley, who is far from the simpleton he is often made out to be, presents a very stern test of any form of representationalism. He is especially threatening for the critical philosophy, which, in his wake in part continues to defend representationalism. If Berkeley is right in rejecting representational approaches to knowledge, then, to the extent that Kant is committed to a form of this approach effectively refuted by the Irish philosopher, Kant cannot successfully defend representationalism. This in part explains Kant's strongly critical reaction to Berkeley's position, which goes well beyond the simple confusion between two forms of idealism.

Like Kant, Berkeley is both an idealist and an empiricist. The attack on Berkeleian idealism is often directed against its supposedly skeptical conclusions. According to this argument—an argument worked out well before analytic philosophy turned against English empiricism—since knowledge comes from experience, any attack on empiricism must necessarily lead to skepticism. Though Berkeley undermines English empiricism as formulated in the new way of ideas, he remains very much an empiricist, a full-fledged member of the English empirical tradition. Yet for purposes of the rejection of idealism, Berkeley's own empiricism was unfortunately simply forgotten some time later in the Kantian and then in the analytic assault on idealism, specifically including Berkeley's idealism, for allegedly denying the existence of the external world.

Berkeley, who is routinely classed as an idealist, refers to his own view as immaterialism. His famous slogan *esse est percipi* has apparently nothing other than the name in common with Plato, whose position he supposedly interprets very badly.<sup>60</sup> Like Plato, he was interested in the problem of knowledge; but there the similarities end. Berkeley does not defend any version of the theory of ideas attributed to Plato, and he is not

directly interested in the Platonic problem of the one and the many. He rather reacts against the perceived consequences of the new science and the empiricist philosophy based on it, most prominently in Locke, which appears to exclude God from any cognitive role in the emerging view of the world. At about the same time as Reid, but well before Moore and Wittgenstein, Berkeley, who distinguishes between philosophical and ordinary views, opposes philosophy for the express purpose of defending common sense. Since he regards the ordinary person as committed to religion, but philosophy (and modern science) as opposed to it, his position amounts to a defense of the right of religion against the right of philosophy by featuring what for W. Sellars would be an early form of the folk view.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, Berkeleyan idealism can be understood as a “reactionary” effort to counter the effects of modern science through a conception closer to common sense.

Berkeley's idealism arises out of his critique of Lockean empiricism on the basis of his original interpretation of the theory of ideas. Berkeley, who attributes many philosophical problems to the misuse of language, does not deny general ideas. But he rejects abstract general ideas in holding that an idea becomes general in being made to stand for similar particular ideas.<sup>62</sup> Berkeley, who takes a strongly a posteriori, empiricist approach, holds that what exists is always particular, never general; and that whatever exists can be sensed or imagined. He applies this approach to natural science and to mathematics. For instance, he rejects as unintelligible Locke's conception of a general triangle<sup>63</sup> as well as, and well before Kant, Newton's conceptions of absolute space, time, and motion. Like Kant, Berkeley denies that an analysis of motion requires a conception of absolute space, understood as “distinct from that which is perceived by sense, and related to bodies.”<sup>64</sup> According to Berkeley, it is not even possible to imagine space without body.

Berkeley is not a rationalist, but an empiricist, committed to the view that knowledge must arise through experience, but, like Hume, Reid, and others, critical of Locke's representative form of empiricism. Locke's view of knowledge depends on the familiar distinction between primary and secondary ideas, originating with Descartes, Galileo, and other students of nature. This distinction is intended to isolate ideas that reliably inform us about the way the world is from those that do not. Locke distinguishes simple ideas, which are necessarily true about the independent external world, by separating them from merely secondary ideas.

Berkeley's position, hence his idealism, turns on his rejection of any version of the distinction between primary and secondary ideas. In response to Locke, Berkeley denies we can ever know that our ideas resemble independent objects. For Berkeley, in effect there are only secondary ideas, so no ideas, none at all, can count as trustworthy representations of a mind-independent external world. Like Reid, he claims against Locke that as soon as we distinguish between things and ideas we land in skepticism.<sup>65</sup>

Berkeley regards the view that perceived qualities really are in the object, e.g. that the apple is really red, as at once absurd, dangerous, and repulsive: it is absurd, since it leads to skepticism; it is dangerous, since this view inclines toward universal causal determinism, hence toward atheism, and for this reason apparently undermines all morality; and it is repulsive since it points toward an idea of the world as a vast machine whereas on the contrary God's creation could not really be like that. The antidote, Berkeley thought, must lie in immaterialism. His strategy, which is to deny that there is any quality that extramental objects can possess, consists in applying arguments about the relativity of perception already known to the ancient

Greeks against the kind of general worldview then emerging out of modern science as well as against the associated form of empiricism.

Berkeley's position anticipates Reid's (later Moore's) reliance on common sense and Wittgenstein's attack on pseudo-philosophical problems. He begins the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) by claiming that philosophy wrongly contradicts common sense in leading to atheism and to skepticism about what we clearly know. Berkeley, who accepts that sensible things are whatever is immediately perceived by sense, opposes materialism, or the view that there is a mind-independent material substance in which qualities inhere. The die is quickly cast in the First Dialogue, where Berkeley considers three arguments leading to the conclusion that material substance does not exist. The first argument, or the argument from relativity, which goes all the way back to Plato's *Phaedo*, shows that some qualities, such as hot or cold, depend on the perceiver, hence are not objective but only subject-relative. It follows that secondary qualities are not in the thing, since there is no heat in the fire, but only in the mind. The ideas we have of hot or cold do not correspond to anything like themselves in the external world, where there are only solid bodies at rest or in motion. The second argument shows that all qualities without exception are secondary, hence none are primary. For there is nothing we can say about an object which does not depend on experience of it, hence on mind. Berkeley concludes that arguments against secondary qualities count against primary qualities as well, and further infers that there are no primary qualities. The third argument is directed against the concept of matter, or so-called material substance. Berkeley points out that thinking of things causes me to infer the existence of a material substratum with various properties, such as extension, but it has already been

conceded that all qualities depend on the mind for their existence. He concludes that whatever is immediately perceived is an idea and ideas cannot exist outside the mind.

The new way of ideas is intended to base theory of knowledge on the relation of ideas to things. Berkeley's idealism turns the new way of ideas on its head by showing that it leads, not to knowledge, but to skepticism, and that from the philosophical perspective there is nothing other than minds and ideas in the mind. Berkeley does not deny the existence of the external world. Yet in denying materialism, he reduces it to nothing more than a series of ideas in the mind.

Berkeley's claim that the world is nothing other than ideas in the mind sounds superficially like Platonism. Yet he is not a Platonist but rather an anti-Platonist. Unlike Plato, there is no suggestion that only some privileged observers can know reality, since everyone has ideas. Further unlike Plato, Berkeley denies the ability to distinguish between appearance and reality. He does not turn things into ideas but rather claims that what are usually regarded as only the appearances of things are the real things. According to Berkeley, if we assume that we perceive only appearances, there is no way to know they resemble what is, or even any need to assume the existence of a world distinct from ideas about it, and the concept of an independent object is unintelligible.<sup>66</sup>

One need not accept Berkeley's conclusion that things are nothing but a congeries of sensible impressions, that is, ideas perceived by the senses, or that everything can be explained in terms of God, to grant the further conclusion that what we perceive are real things or ideas which exist only in the mind. The new way of ideas is the main modern form of the effort extending all the way back to ancient Greece to base claims to know on grasping the way the world is. The way of ideas presupposes the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. In criticiz-

ing this distinction, Berkeley drives a conceptual wedge, which, despite the best efforts of many thinkers, is never later removed, between our ideas and the mind-independent real world. Plato, who distinguishes between appearances and reality, identifies ideas with the real while restricting access to ideas to a privileged few. The new way of ideas, which distinguishes between the idea and its referent in a perceptual theory of knowledge, extends this privilege to everyone. In criticizing the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, Berkeley undermines any version of the representative theory of perception in denying we can go beyond ideas to things. Berkeley's position destroys modern efforts to base claims to know on metaphysical realism, on knowing the way the world is. In this sense, he closely anticipates the German idealist view that knowledge is always knowledge of what is given in and limited to experience.



## German Idealism, British Idealism, and Later Developments

All forms of representationalism are based on metaphysical realism. Later forms of idealism move progressively away from representationalism and metaphysical realism, but not from realism as such, insofar as they base claims to know on empirical realism, or knowledge of the surrounding empirical world, not as it supposedly is, but rather as it is given in experience. The previous chapter described the old way of ideas, or Platonic idealism, idealism as it appeared in ancient philosophy, and the new way of ideas, or the modern, anti-Platonic recovery of representationalism, as well as Berkeley's critical reaction to representationalism. This chapter will describe selected, more recent forms of idealism, including German idealism, British idealism, and later developments tending to weaken the traditional commitment to metaphysical realism in favor of empirical realism.

What is called British idealism is influenced more or less strongly by German idealism. Moore and Russell thought that in refuting British idealism they were also refuting German idealism and idealism *tout court*. This conviction rested on a supposed deep similarity between British and German idealism. In turning now to German and British idealism, I will not be stressing their superficial similarities, which are not helpful and lead mainly to confusion, but rather a number of their important differences.

German and British idealism differ substantially and should not be conflated. German idealism is the result of a tightly

linked series of interactions between a series of thinkers who are among the most important in the philosophical tradition. Though their positions are often very different, each of them derives from and remains closely linked to an ongoing reaction to Kant's critical philosophy. German idealism counts as one of the three main "idealist" approaches to epistemology. British idealism, on the other hand, is less important in general, and the thinkers composing it are not among the main thinkers in the Western tradition as it is usually understood. Compared to German idealism, British idealism is a significantly looser collection of often distantly related positions, a tradition which exists mainly in the eye of the beholders, namely those concerned to criticize and reject it. Unlike Platonism, the new way of ideas, and German idealism, British idealism presents no single epistemological thesis.

Both the old and the new ways of ideas presuppose a link to metaphysical realism, a link that is weakened and then later severed in German idealism. Though Leibniz, a German thinker, is often understood as an idealist,<sup>1</sup> even as the first important modern idealist,<sup>2</sup> and though he influences Kant, by "German idealism" I will have in mind the movement which begins in and is strongly, even decisively influenced by Kant. The first main pillar of German idealism, Kant is not only one of the most influential thinkers of modern times; he is also a transitional figure, an adherent of past doctrines as well as the inventor of a novel, highly original approach, simultaneously committed to metaphysical realism and empirical realism, as well as to representationalism and constructivism. The latter aspects of Kant's position, which co-exist side by side in the critical philosophy, are quickly separated in later post-Kantian German idealism, which, beginning with Fichte, features empirical realism rather than metaphysical realism and constructivism in preference to representationalism.

## ON DESCRIBING GERMAN IDEALISM

Interest in idealism, which rises and falls throughout the Western philosophical tradition, is currently at a low point. After Hegel left the scene, beginning with the Young Hegelians in the 1840s the anti-Hegelian reaction in Germany resulted in a sharp attack on Hegel, which rapidly extended to other forms of "idealism," specifically including Schelling's philosophy of nature, but not Kant's critical philosophy. The Marxist critique of idealism was mainly aimed at Hegel and to a lesser extent at Fichte and Schelling, with whom Engels studied. It did not prevent or even significantly impede a very fruitful return to Kant about the time that British idealism was emerging in England.<sup>3</sup> As a result, around the turn of the twentieth century, when idealism dominated the English debate, various forms of "idealism" were again centrally important to the debate in both Germany and England. The interest in "idealism," or in variations on the idealist theme, during the second half of the nineteenth century in both Germany and England changed rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth century as a direct result of the emergence of English analytic philosophy with its consistent opposition to idealism. Yet Frege, who strongly influenced what later became English analytic philosophy, was not clearly opposed to idealism, unlike Russell and Moore. The rise of analytic philosophy in England turned attention against the idealist component of Kant's critical philosophy and led to the resounding defeat of British idealism. Since that time, there has been continuing but sporadic attention to specific idealist positions, but remarkably little attention to, or sympathy for, their "idealist" component. Plato, often Kant, and Hegel are widely considered to be idealists and among the very few enduringly great philosophical minds, but analytic observers have been remarkably uninterested in acknowledging,

understanding, or defending whatever it is that is idealist about them.

Though German idealism has been, and still is being, extensively studied, there is disagreement about all its main aspects, including who the German idealists were, how they related among themselves, and whether German idealism remains an interesting option at the present time. Students of German idealism, who often devote their professional lives to scrutinizing it in detail, are often careful not to betray any real enthusiasm for it, above all careful not to endorse it. Pinkard, one of the best contemporary students of German idealism, agrees with Gadamer that the rise of German science forever destroyed the interest of idealism.<sup>4</sup> Rüdiger Bubner, who suggests that the fact that idealist views of science are obsolete is not an argument against it,<sup>5</sup> describes German idealism as featuring what he calls “an attractive but outdated view of the world.”<sup>6</sup> Karl Ameriks cautiously asserts that “German Idealism deserves the attention it has received.”<sup>7</sup>

The obvious point that the main German idealists were all Germans writing in German is not helpful. A useful description of German idealism needs to identify what else, if anything, such as a shared doctrinal commitment, they also have in common. “German idealism,” a term which is not employed by any of its main participants, is routinely used to designate the movement initiated by Kant or, on the contrary, since at least some observers think Kant is not an idealist, to refer to the post-Kantian movement in philosophy that is chronologically closest to Kant.

Until recently, it was usual to understand German idealism from a broadly Hegelian perspective. Hegel, who also does not use the term, typically refers to the philosophical movement initiated by Kant and then continued by Hegel’s contemporaries Fichte and Schelling, which he invidiously presents as culmi-

nating in his position, as “the most recent German philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> The left-wing Young Hegelian critics of Hegel (Marx, Engels, Bruno Bauer, David Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and others) uncritically accepted and extended Hegel’s reading of the history of philosophy in propagating a view uncritically ascribed to Hegel, but which Hegel nowhere expresses, and which he in fact denies, that philosophy itself comes to a peak and to an end in his position. This leads to a familiar but erroneous conception of German idealism as composed of four main positions, which can be characterized through adjectives Hegel uses in referring to the idealist theories of Kant (critical, subjective), Fichte (subjective), and Schelling (objective); similarly, his own position, in virtue of his concern throughout with the absolute, is often described as absolute idealism.

The challenge to a Hegelian reading of German idealism, which emerged shortly after he died, has gathered force in recent years. In his Munich lectures on the history of philosophy, Schelling suggested, with himself in mind, that German idealism was continuing to develop beyond Hegel.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the Young Hegelians, Schelling’s admirers, who shared his dislike of Hegel, liked to believe he successfully refuted his erstwhile friend, former roommate, brilliant older colleague, and initial philosophical protégé in Jena, and that German idealism reached a high point in his later thought. This view is briefly reprised by Heidegger in a study of Schelling<sup>10</sup> and then stated in detail by Walter Schulz.<sup>11</sup> A number of historians of philosophy and of ideas are influenced by this view. For Beiser, Hegel was finally not a creative and original thinker, at the very least not as creative nor as original as his disciples suggest.<sup>12</sup> Though he has often written about Hegel,<sup>13</sup> Beiser favors Kant (and to a lesser extent Fichte), and sees in Schelling the most brilliant of the so-called absolute idealists.<sup>14</sup> Any Hegelian reading of German idealism presupposes that Kant’s critical philosophy is centered

on epistemology. Yet Heidegger rejects an epistemological reading of the critical philosophy, depicting Kant as concerned not with epistemology but with ontology, and portraying the critical philosophy as unrelated to the later German idealist theories of knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

### KANT AND A HEGELIAN READING OF GERMAN IDEALISM

Kant, who is an ahistorical thinker, is at least familiar with the history of philosophy, but stands at the very beginning of German idealism. Fichte, who does not know much about the history of philosophy, is deeply preoccupied with his relation to Kant. Schelling, who knows the history of philosophy in detail, apparently describes German idealism only after Hegel's death. Hegel's view of the history of philosophy strongly influences approaches to German idealism. Since Hegel is the first thinker to offer a clear theory of German idealism, there seems to be no reasonable alternative to taking a stand for or against Hegel's view of this philosophical tendency.

Recent attention to German idealism implicitly or explicitly criticizes Hegel's theory of the movement in focusing less on identifying an overall theme than on specialized study of various themes. These include the supposed German idealist significance of the great German romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin<sup>16</sup> and early romanticism (*Frühromantik*) in general,<sup>17</sup> the problem of system in connection with epistemological foundationalism,<sup>18</sup> the concept of subjectivity,<sup>19</sup> and so on. Studies of such themes challenge as too simplistic the simple orthodox Hegelian reading of the movement, including his disciples' view that it culminates (and ends) in his position.

The Hegelian view of German idealism is most helpful in addressing idealist epistemology, or a specifically idealist approach

to the epistemological problem, as a central thread running throughout all the main idealist positions beginning with Kant. In *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (*Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, 1801), his first philosophical publication, Hegel, in discussing his predecessor Kant and his contemporaries Fichte and Schelling, distinguishes between subjective and objective forms of "idealism."<sup>20</sup> This way of reading German idealism is developed and deepened but never basically altered in Hegel's later writings.

In his way of depicting German idealism, Hegel not only follows upon, but is also influenced by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Kant presents his position as both the first and the last philosophy worthy of the name. It is the first since earlier positions, which are not critical, hence which do not examine the cognitive instrument before embarking on the road to knowledge, and are dogmatic, hence not fully philosophical. It is the last, or final position, since it allegedly solves once and for all, in a way insulated against the very possibility of the need for later revision, the main problem(s) of knowledge. According to Kant, his position is true; there can never be more than one true position; and, other than the style in which his texts are composed, nothing, nothing at all, can possibly be changed in his position. He specifically says in an unguarded moment of conceptual hubris that to change anything, anything at all in the critical philosophy "introduces contradictions not merely into the system, but into universal human reason."<sup>21</sup>

Hegel rejects Kant's conviction that the critical philosophy is the one true position. He rather endorses the idea that it is a milestone on the way to a correct theory while rejecting the suggestion that the problem of knowledge has finally been solved. He regards Kant as presenting a cognitive approach that is further developed in later positions. In a post-Kantian environ-

ment, where numerous thinkers each pretended to propose the only correct reading of the critical philosophy, Hegel is drawn to Fichte's vociferous claim to be the only thinker to understand Kant. He regards Fichte, and significantly not Kant, as the first one to deduce the categories. And he accepts Schelling's claim to develop Fichte's transcendental philosophy through the philosophy of nature.

Hegel depicts post-Kantian idealism as engaged in formulating a solution to the problem of knowledge along roughly Kantian lines. In building on Kant, post-Kantian German idealists provide different solutions to the epistemological problem. The ongoing effort to respond to Kant's original question unites within a single tradition efforts deployed by Kant and, in reaction to his theories, later German idealists.

It is helpful, to identify a German idealist approach to the problem of knowledge, to call attention to a distinction between Kantian and post-Kantian German idealism. Since post-Kantian German idealism consists in a series of reactions to Kant and responses to these reactions, Kant and later German idealism are inseparable. Any description of German idealism requires an understanding of Kant, which in turn requires a slightly fuller description of the critical philosophy.

The usual accounts of Kant's critical philosophy as a single, coherent position are extremely misleading, even false. It was suggested earlier that Kant's position, which evolves, contains two distinct, irreducibly different answers to the epistemological question he raises in the Herz letter, hence two different epistemological solutions co-existing side by side in his writings. In the Herz letter, where Kant asks how representations relate to objects, his way of raising the epistemological problem suggests his well-known, anti-Platonic, representationalist response, which further develops the main insight of the new way of ideas. Kant also proposes a less well known, antirepresen-



tationalist, constructivist approach to knowledge, which breaks with both Platonism and the new way of ideas in eschewing metaphysical realism for empirical realism. The German idealist reaction to Kant quickly abandons representationalism and metaphysical realism in favor of constructivism and empirical realism. Getting clear about German idealism requires getting clear about Kant's constructivism and its influence on post-Kantian German idealism.

### KANT'S COPERNICAN REVOLUTION, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND LATER GERMAN IDEALISM

Though Kant has been discussed over several centuries in exhaustive detail, his well-known Copernican revolution in philosophy seems never to have been studied in the detail and depth it deserves. The most detailed study of which I am aware concludes that, despite numerous passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and other writings, and despite what Kant's contemporaries may have thought, there is in fact no significant link between Kant and Copernicus.<sup>22</sup> This is at the very least surprising since Kant's Copernican revolution is arguably crucial to his position, for later German idealism, and, I believe, for the problem of knowledge today.

Kant's Copernican revolution amply merits a more detailed discussion than we can provide here in the context of idealist approaches to epistemology, but we also cannot avoid this theme. Though his Copernican revolution is unacceptable in the way he formulates it, the task of reformulating the constructivist insight on which it turns is, after the failure of all known forms of direct realism and representationalism, central to making progress in epistemology.

Kant's Copernican revolution is his version of constructivism, a term of art he never uses to describe his position, but which

is helpful in understanding his epistemological approach. Constructivism is an approach to knowledge whose interest lies in the apparent failure of direct and representational realist alternative approaches.

Direct realism, the first, most obvious approach to knowledge, the approach which occurs to anyone who does not think the problem through, is a claim to grasp cognitive objects directly, without any intermediary between the subject which knows and the object which is known. Direct realism, which still finds adherents, is typically rejected for its inability to respond to problems of illusion and delusion. Representationalism, which becomes interesting if direct realism fails, contends, like direct realism, that to know is to know the mind-independent real, while adding a representation between the subject which knows and the object which is known. The difficulty of representationalism lies in analyzing the relation of representations to objects, in a word in showing that representations in fact represent. Constructivism is a third-best approach to theory of knowledge, which gives up metaphysical realism, hence any claim to know the mind-independent external world as it is, in favor of empirical realism. By constructivism I will mean the claim to know the empirical real, not as it is in itself in independence of the subject, but rather as it is "constructed" by one or more subjects as a necessary condition of knowledge. In giving up on efforts to know metaphysical reality, constructivists of all kinds typically claim no more than to know the empirically real world as it is given in experience but not the real as it is given in itself.

Kant does not discover but rather (independently) rediscovers the constructivist approach to knowledge. Mathematical constructivism, which he also favors, was already prominent in ancient Greece, for instance in the construction of plane figures as a method of proof in Euclidean geometry. Kant explic-

itly distinguishes between philosophy, which analyzes concepts, and mathematics, which constructs concepts.<sup>23</sup> Epistemological constructivism is a specifically modern approach to knowledge, which before Kant is widely anticipated by a series of modern thinkers, both idealists and nonidealists, spread widely across the philosophical spectrum, including Hobbes and Vico,<sup>24</sup> and perhaps also Montaigne.<sup>25</sup> It is later worked out by such post-Kantians, though some of them might contest the appellation “constructivist,” as Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, Cassirer, Dewey, Fleck,<sup>26</sup> Kuhn, and Sellars. These and other “constructivists” provide different interpretations of what it means to construct the cognitive object as a condition of knowledge.<sup>27</sup> In the critical philosophy, Kant develops an idealist form of constructivism which strongly influenced post-Kantian German idealism as well as a number of thinkers not often considered to be idealists, some of whom have just been mentioned.

Constructivism was in the air around the time of Kant. It is at least implicit in the contextualist theories of Montesquieu and Herder. It later becomes a main theme running throughout later German idealism. A number of thinkers outside the straight line leading from Kant by way of Fichte and Schelling to Hegel (and Marx) developed variations on the constructivist theme. Herder, Kant’s former student, calls attention to the link between culture of all kinds and a historically mutable, underlying worldview in famously remarking that “Shakespeare was no Sophocles, Milton no Homer, Bolingbroke no Pericles.”<sup>28</sup> Novalis, a leading figure in romanticism, repeatedly evokes a version of the constructivist idea in writing that “We know only insofar as we make.”<sup>29</sup> Slightly later, Lessing was also interested in a similar doctrine.<sup>30</sup>

The term “constructivism,” which is not often used in respect to the critical philosophy, has recently acquired a slightly pejorative connotation through its association with French post-

modernist theories.<sup>31</sup> To reject, or to overlook, this aspect of Kant's critical philosophy because of contemporary philosophical excess would make it very difficult to grasp his central philosophical insight. Kant's constructivist solution to the problem of knowledge is evoked in various ways in his Copernican revolution. Discussion of Kant in English, which often focuses on whether there is a Copernican revolution in Kant in any meaningful sense,<sup>32</sup> frequently fails to address this crucial aspect of Kant's position. Kant's contemporaries, who believed the Copernican revolution was central to Kant's position, were clearer than Kant scholars now are about its existence and importance. Reinhold,<sup>33</sup> who began the effort to reconstruct the critical philosophy leading directly to post-Kantian German idealism, and then Schelling,<sup>34</sup> who was a major participant in this effort, each suggest that Kant's critical philosophy can be understood as resting on a Copernican turn separating his position from prior thought. If they are correct, and if the little understood Copernican turn is central to the critical philosophy, then despite the immense size of the Kant discussion, arguably few of Kant's students have more than a hazy idea of either Kant or post-Kantian German idealism.<sup>35</sup> Certainly current efforts to grasp Kant without idealism, hence without the Copernican turn, are very far from understanding the central insight in his position. I will come back to this point below.

Kant evokes a constructivist approach to knowledge in different places in his writings. In a celebrated passage in the second introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he justifies turning to constructivism through the successful practice of modern science, a practice he in turn generalizes as the solution to the problem of knowledge in the critical philosophy. In a remark on the transition to modern science in the seventeenth century, he famously claims that, on the basis of their research, namely on a posteriori grounds, natural scientists like Galileo, Torricelli, and

Stahl knew that “reason only understands what it itself produces according to its own design . . .”<sup>36</sup> According to Kant, scientific practice in interrogating nature consists in literally forcing it to answer questions we put to it. Scientific research presupposes an a priori element, or conceptual structure, consisting in a series of scientific laws in terms of which the working scientist interrogates nature, and in terms of which prospective answers are accepted or rejected. This line of reasoning leads Kant to his remarkable claim, which seems amply supported in scientific practice, that scientists do not understand nature by directly grasping mind-independent external objects, but only on the basis of a preexisting conceptual framework.

Kant’s view supposes that the natural sciences do not approach nature with anything like the proverbial blank slate. Nor do they in practice interrogate nature without presuppositions in a supposedly strictly phenomenological manner. Rather, in calling on prior research, they structure efforts to know nature with respect to already accepted principles, scientific laws, and experiments. The difficulty lies in generalizing this version of modern scientific procedure, which is intended to produce rigorous scientific knowledge, to yield a very different kind of philosophical knowledge. Kant’s contribution lies in suggesting the considerable interest of inverting the usual procedure, according to which knowledge is based on objects, in making objects depend on knowledge. The consequence, as he notes, is to take the subject seriously. In this respect, he calls attention to a deep parallel between his suggestion and the Copernican approach to astronomy. Copernicus, Kant notes, gave up the approach in which the observer is situated on the surface of the earth, which is located at the center of the universe revolving round it, in making the observer situated on the surface of the earth revolve around the sun, which becomes the center. Kant restates this approach in his own position in suggesting that, in-

stead of basing concepts on objects, it is potentially more useful to base objects as it were on concepts.

Kant connects this constructivist idea to Copernican astronomy in a famous footnote comparing his methodological innovation to Copernicus' epistemological breakthrough, which supposedly lies in identifying the source of observed motion not in the objects but in the observer.

In the same way, the central laws of the motion of the heavenly bodies established with certainty what Copernicus assumed at the beginning only as a hypothesis, and at the same time they proved the invisible force (of Newtonian attraction) that binds the universe, which would have remained forever undiscovered if Copernicus had not ventured, in a manner contradictory to the senses yet true, to seek for the observed movements not in the objects of the heavens but in their observer. In this Preface I propose the transformation in our way of thinking presented in criticism merely as a hypothesis, analogous to other hypotheses, only in order to draw our notice to the first attempts at such a transformation, which are always hypothetical, even though in the treatise itself it will be proved not hypothetically but rather apodictically from the constitution of our representations of space and time and from the elementary concepts of the understanding.<sup>37</sup>

It is perhaps no accident that a full study of Kant's Copernican revolution has not yet emerged. A full or even a fuller treatment of Kant's Copernican revolution, which surpasses the scope of the present work, would require at the very least an account of Copernican astronomy, Kant's views of Copernican

and other forms of astronomy, the philosophy of science Kant formulates through his reading of modern astronomy, and the generalization of that philosophy of science as the basis of his critical philosophy. Suffice it to say here that Kant's Copernican turn can be reconstructed as two related claims: first, we cannot reliably claim to know that we know a mind-independent object, or more precisely we cannot know that we know a mind-independent object as it is; and, second, we can only know, or know that we know, what we can be said in some sense to construct. The difficulty in a constructivist approach to epistemology, which Kant arguably does not solve, and which has engaged a series of later thinkers, is how to understand the meaning of constructing our epistemological objects as a condition of knowing them.

Kant does not state his Copernican revolution in philosophy in the form of an argument but rather as a conclusion. The analysis which supports this conclusion can be briefly reconstructed through two related arguments. The first argument supports the familiar Platonic, antirepresentationalist view that on the basis of appearances we cannot reliably claim to know mind-independent reality as it is. Since Kant uses the terms "representation" and "appearance" synonymously for what Plato calls "appearance," a more modern formulation of this point in Kantian language is that we cannot reliably claim to know that representations in fact represent. This Platonic argument suffices to refute every known form of representationalism that has so far emerged in the Western tradition. It further points beyond representationalism to the failure to demonstrate any form of the usual metaphysical realist epistemological claim. From this angle of vision, repeated claims to know the real raised by idealists and nonidealists alike are unfailingly dogmatic. Such claims do not surpass the level of Platonic myth. No argument has ever been formulated to demonstrate the fa-

miliar, indeed ubiquitous assertion that we in fact do know the metaphysical real as it is. In Kantian language, there is no way to go from appearance to reality, and, other than on a verbal level, the distinction between appearance and reality cannot be drawn. In other words, it cannot be shown that a phenomenon is also an appearance, more precisely that a phenomenon in fact refers beyond itself to the mind-independent real. This conclusion later led in Kant's wake to the emergence of various forms of phenomenology.

The first argument is directed against representationalism, hence against any representationalist solution to the epistemological problem as Kant formulates it in the Herz letter. The second argument, which presupposes the correctness of the first argument, suggests that constructivism is an at least potentially acceptable epistemological alternative. The first argument presupposes there is a real mind-independent world and we know it as it is. The second argument presupposes no more than that the subject is affected through sensations it works up into objects of experience and knowledge. Kant, who rejects any form of the widespread claim for direct, intuitive knowledge, holds that what we experience and know is shaped by the structure of the human mind, which he describes in reference to a fixed series of categories built in or "hardwired" as it were, not abstracted from experience. As early as the first page of his book, Kant claims that objects of experience are worked up or constructed out of impressions.<sup>38</sup> According to Kant, we do not directly grasp the world as it is, but rather construct our cognitive objects as they are given in experience.

Kant's constructivist analysis of knowledge, which dispenses with reference to anything other than the contents of experience, was widely adopted by post-Kantian German idealism. Thus Fichte's "Deduction of representation," the centerpiece of the first and most important version of his *Foundations of the*



*Science of Knowledge* (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794), which in fact rejects representationalism,<sup>39</sup> is based on a constructivist approach to knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Post-Kantian German idealism does not abandon, but rather further develops, Kant's concern with the problem of knowledge through the antirepresentationalist, constructivist approach advanced in the Copernican turn.

### POST-KANTIAN IDEALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, SUBJECTIVITY, AND HISTORY

Kant's hybrid commitment to incompatible representational and constructivist approaches to knowledge dissolves in the post-Kantian effort to carry through and complete the critical philosophy. The main thrust of post-Kantian German idealism lies in carrying forward and completing the Kantian project according to its spirit but not necessarily according to its letter. Fichte, the thinker chronologically closest and most closely committed to realizing Kant's vision of the critical philosophy, rejects Kant's representationalism in favor of an updated version of Kantian constructivism. Following Fichte's lead, later post-Kantian German idealism treats Kant's Copernican turn as correct but still undeveloped in a series of further efforts to work out a constructivist theory of knowledge.

Post-Kantian German idealism further transforms Kant's resolutely ahistorical conception of constructivism into a historical conception. The later German idealists are separated from Kant by the great French Revolution, whose enormous, but often misunderstood consequences continue to echo through later modern times, and which strongly affects later philosophy. Fichte was one of the earliest and strongest foreign supporters of the French Revolution, which he defended even against Napoleon.<sup>41</sup> When the French Revolution erupted, it

was widely believed that the French monarchy had been established by God to endure forever. In toppling the French monarchy, in separating Church and state in France, the French Revolution initiated a conceptual turn toward a historical grasp of knowing, which is one of the most powerful but least understood insights of modern times.

Kant rigorously distinguishes between logical and psychological conditions of knowledge. Consistent with his ahistorical epistemological conception, Kant depicts epistemological construction as a logical, but ahistorical achievement. Kant, who insists the epistemological subject must construct its conceptual object as a necessary condition of knowledge, notoriously fails to specify what that might mean. The closest he comes to developing his thesis is an unsatisfactory passage where he famously but obscurely describes the schematism of the understanding as “a hidden art in the depths of the human soul . . .”<sup>42</sup> Since the schematism is a necessary requirement of experience, it cannot be known but must be inferred.

The French Revolution, which calls attention to the results of human activity in building up or in tearing down the human world, generally supports Kant’s constructivist thesis. It suggests that human reality is in some sense constructed by human beings while adding a historical element, wholly foreign to his a priori approach. Since human beings are situated in a historical context, attention to them as the real subjects undermines Kant’s own efforts to avoid what later became known as psychologism. In terms familiar since Husserl, psychologism is any form of conflation between a logical and a psychological conception of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Kant, who does not use the term, sees psychologism as rampant in English empiricism. He typically objects to Locke’s alleged “physiology of the understanding.”<sup>44</sup> To counter this difficulty, as well as Hume’s well known bundle theory of perceptions, he presents a wholly theoretical concep-

tion of the subject reduced to its cognitive capacities, or the so-called “I think,” in a clear reference to the Cartesian cogito, “which must be able to accompany all my representations.”<sup>45</sup>

The outlines of the story of German idealism are well known and have often been told, sometimes in a way which downplays the Kantian concern with knowledge,<sup>46</sup> only rarely as an attempt to improve on Kant’s theory of knowledge,<sup>47</sup> and never, so far as I am aware, as an effort to work out a viable theory of constructivism. Post-Kantian German idealism is composed of a series of reactions to Kant by thinkers, often of the first rank—they include such anti-Kantians as Hamann, Herder, Jacobi, and Maimon, and such “Kantians” as Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, perhaps Hölderlin, and even Marx—all of whom further react to each other as part of the effort to improve on Kant’s theory of knowledge. The post-Kantians were convinced that the critical philosophy only partially realized its project, which remained incomplete. Post-Kantian German idealism can be understood as an ongoing effort undertaken by different hands to carry forward and to complete Kant’s project. This effort by thinkers sympathetic to Kant but often opposed to each other can be understood in terms of the old biblical distinction between the spirit and the letter. Kant, who was dissatisfied with the reception of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, famously suggested, in explicitly appealing to this distinction, that his position should not be read literally, nor according to the letter, but according to its intrinsic spirit.<sup>48</sup> In applying this distinction to Kant, one can say that, even in its supposedly most faithful form, that is, in Fichte’s effort to be a seamless Kantian, post-Kantian German idealism is unfaithful to the letter of the critical philosophy in all its forms. Yet even in Hegel, who is very critical of Kant as well as of post-Kantian German idealism, post-Kantian idealism is always motivated by conflicting interpretations of the critical philosophy.

Post-Kantian German idealism begins with K. L. Reinhold, an obscure thinker who influenced other, more important thinkers in what very quickly became a significant project, conducted by different participants in a shared effort to carry Kant's Copernican insight beyond the critical philosophy. In his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy* (*Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, 1786), Reinhold, who calls attention to the role of system in the critical philosophy, suggests Kant requires but fails to provide an adequate model of system as the necessary basis of scientific philosophy.<sup>49</sup>

In remarks on system in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant suggests that the difference between an aggregate, or a mere rhapsody, and science is that the latter follows from a single principle.<sup>50</sup> Kant's conception of system based on a single principle strongly resembles Cartesian foundationalism. Descartes employs a quasi-geometrical philosophical model according to which the initial principle, or cogito, is known with certainty, and the remainder of the theory can be strictly deduced from it. Reinhold, who also follows Descartes, offers an empirical form of the Cartesian foundationalist model. In *Contributions to the Correction of Prior Misunderstandings of Philosophers* (*Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen*, 1790–94) and in other writings of the period, Reinhold restates the critical philosophy on the basis of an empirical principle, the so-called capacity of representation (*Vorstellungsvermögen*). His effort to recast the critical philosophy in the form of a system Kant invokes but allegedly fails to provide is a main strand in later German idealism.

Reinhold plays a crucial role in the context of the post-Kantian effort to improve the critical philosophy leading to the emergence of post-Kantian German idealism. He is singularly important as the initial thinker to take up this cause. But, as Hegel quickly pointed out, in remarks on Reinhold's own,

highly unstable position, the latter is utterly unimportant, even a paradigmatic nonphilosopher.<sup>51</sup> Reinhold attempted to improve the critical philosophy according to its spirit while rejecting its letter by regressing to an earlier, quasi-Cartesian foundationalist epistemological model. Yet, whereas Kant relies on a priori categories, Reinhold clearly violates the letter and arguably the spirit of the critical philosophy in invoking an a posteriori principle. Reinhold's weak attempt to reformulate the critical philosophy, which was widely rejected, at least called attention to a problem in Kant that neither he nor Reinhold was capable of solving.

Reinhold's effort to reformulate the critical philosophy was quickly taken up by a series of thinkers of the first rank. Fichte was the first really powerful thinker to enter the debate. He was quickly followed by Schelling, an equally powerful thinker, who was for a time Fichte's self-described disciple. Schelling was in turn followed by Hegel, who is arguably an even more powerful thinker, and who was initially regarded as dependent on Schelling, but who later broke with him. Since the interpretation of post-Kantian German idealism is fraught with scholarly controversy, it is not easy to describe specific contributions to rethinking Kant's position according to the spirit of the critical philosophy. Hopelessly simplifying, one can say that Fichte's contribution lies in revising the Kantian conception of the subject, that Schelling develops the Fichtean conception of system while initiating a turn to history, and that Hegel extends the Fichtean conception of the subject as a plural subject and enormously develops the historical turn.<sup>52</sup>

Fichte, who is the first great post-Kantian German idealist, determines the entire later course of the discussion through his influence on his equally important, slightly younger contemporaries Schelling and Hegel. In Kant's wake, when numerous thinkers claimed to be the only one to understand the criti-

cal philosophy, Fichte's assertion to provide the correct reading of Kant was acknowledged by the young Schelling, who was still a precocious teenager when he began to publish, and by the young Hegel. Since the young Schelling understood himself to be a disciple of Fichte, and since Hegel is influenced by both, it is not surprising that Schelling and Hegel both read Kant through Fichte's eyes. Indeed, the tendency to read Kant through Fichte continues in Hegel's and Schelling's later writings after Schelling has broken with Fichte and then with Hegel.

Fichte is a notoriously difficult author. It is helpful, to understand Fichte, to distinguish between often confusing language in which he formulates his position and his position itself, which often point in different directions. In his early writings, notably in the *Foundations of the Science of Knowledge*—this is arguably his major work, the first version of his full position and the first great document in post-Kantian German idealism—Fichte's language misleadingly suggests a commitment to representationalism. His treatise centers on a "Deduction of representation," which occurs toward the end of the theoretical analysis immediately prior to the practical analysis in a strategic place in the book. Yet, it should be noted, to avoid misunderstanding, that, despite Fichte's terminology, the position he expounds in this book is not representational but antirepresentational and constructivist. His antirepresentationalism is clear in the following passage: "According to the Science of Knowledge, then, the ultimate ground of all reality for the self is an original interaction between the self and something outside it, of which nothing more can be said, save that it must be utterly opposed to the self."<sup>53</sup> Fichte, who regards himself as closer to Kant than he ever really was, continues to talk about the thing in itself, and even regards the relation to it as a necessary basis for all human consciousness.<sup>54</sup> Yet he basically differs from Kant

in cutting the vestigial Kantian link between the phenomenon, understood as a representation, or appearance, and the noumenon, or thing in itself, it is held to represent. The result is to admit Kant's claim to a mind-independent external world, central to his effort to refute "bad" idealism, while denying it can possibly be known.

Fichte's antirepresentationalist commitment to constructivism is already clear even earlier in the important review of Aenesidemus ("Aenesidemus-Rezension") in which he initially formulated the ideas which later became the basic principles of his position. "It is precisely the task of the Critical Philosophy to show that no such passage is required [i.e., that we do not need to look outside ourselves for a so-called higher foundation], that everything which occurs in our mind can be completely explained and comprehended on the basis of the mind itself."<sup>55</sup> In invoking the concept of the self, or subject, as finite human being, Fichte removes the ambiguity in Kant's effort to provide a theory of knowledge based on an abstract principle in drawing the lesson provided by the French Revolution, which Fichte fervently supported,<sup>56</sup> at the evident cost, unacceptable to Kant, of transforming Kant's a priori concept of the minimal epistemological subject into an a posteriori conception of finite human being.

Fichte makes at least three important contributions to post-Kantian German idealism understood as the further development of the critical philosophy. Fichte's first contribution concerns Kantian constructivism. The second relates to his reformulation of the Kantian conception of the subject. Kant's critical philosophy reduces the subject to a single epistemological function, that is, its supposed capacity to accompany representations. For Fichte, human beings are at the root of human reality, and, hence, of human knowledge. In spite of his repeated assertions of perfect fidelity to Kant, Fichte initiates an

anti-Kantian anthropological turn, which persists and progressively deepens in later post-Kantian German idealism. He entirely reworks Kant's a priori approach to knowledge in general as an a posteriori approach to human knowledge, in which subject, cognitive object, and knowledge are no longer understood from the arid perspective of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge whatsoever, but rather with respect to a human subject, hence in specifically human terms.

A third Fichtean contribution lies in his relentless, indeed obsessive effort—there are apparently no less than sixteen different versions of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*—to formulate a fully systematic position. The strongly systematic character of Fichte's position reflects his adherence to and interpretation of Kant's insistence on system as the criterion of science. Fichte's insistence on system is further developed in Schelling's early writings, composed before he left Jena very soon after the turn of the nineteenth century, and then later in Hegel's position.

Schelling, although undoubtedly a very important thinker, is less important than his other great German idealist colleagues for the theme of epistemological constructivism. After his early Fichtean period, Schelling quickly leaves epistemological concerns, as least as they were understood by his colleagues at the time, behind in favor of an increasing turn to religious themes. Schelling's early interest in the problem of knowledge led to the philosophy of identity, which influenced the further development of post-Kantian German idealism, but which has already vanished from his concerns when he turns to such themes as freedom and mythology in later writings. Though his later position has epistemological implications, it represents in fact a retreat from the more explicit epistemological concerns of his youth.

Schelling is an extremely protean thinker, the most protean among the great German idealists, and perhaps even among the



entire pantheon of philosophers of the first rank. The interpretation of his philosophical development has spawned a minor cottage industry in which different observers vie with each other in arguing for continuity in Schelling's position through its many different forms.<sup>57</sup> Schelling was always an original thinker. Even in his earliest writings, when he was consciously striving to be an authentic Fichtean, and was content to imitate Fichte's own very vocal claim to be an authentic Kantian, Schelling was already on the way to his own original position.

Beginning in 1797, he left Fichte's position behind in a series of texts on the philosophy of nature. Philosophy of nature in the broad sense goes all the way back in the Western philosophical tradition to pre-Socratic cosmological speculation about the universe. Kant, who was deeply versed in modern science, made important contributions to cosmology and wrote extensively on what would now be called philosophy of science. Schelling's philosophy of nature took shape as an attempt literally to "construct" or "deduce" nature on a priori grounds, where "nature" is understood as what is in fact presupposed in the empirical investigations of the natural sciences as a so-called "objective system of reason."

Schelling's most important early work, which was influential in the line of development leading from Kant over Fichte to Hegel, is the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (*System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, 1800). From the perspective of German idealism, Schelling's treatise innovates, as its name suggests, with respect to the conception of system. In the *System*, Schelling emphasizes his strongly Kantian concern to systematize knowledge by uncovering what determines it, its ground so to speak.<sup>58</sup> His description of his aim as providing a proof of transcendental idealism as a system of all knowledge "not in general, but in actual fact"<sup>59</sup> suggests that Fichte's transcendental philosophy falls short of this goal. In the context of the post-

Kantian discussion, Schelling is implying that Fichte's position is incomplete, that is, that Fichte simply failed to complete the critical philosophy, hence failed in his effort to present the finally acceptable formulation of idealism.

The post-Kantian German idealists are all influenced in different ways and degrees by Spinoza. In his philosophy of nature, Schelling adopts Spinoza's famous view of the parallel between ideas and things, or mind and nature.<sup>60</sup> Neither transcendental philosophy, nor Fichte's position, nor even the philosophy of nature through which Schelling sought to supplement Fichte's transcendental philosophy, is adequate by itself; a successful theory must combine both. Schelling regards his task as to provide a theoretical proof of the complementary nature of these two opposing sciences.<sup>61</sup> In other words, each science is incomplete and each presupposes the other.<sup>62</sup>

In this book, Schelling differs with Fichte's position as it existed at this time in three main ways. One is through the emphasis on history, which is not developed in Fichte's early *Science of Knowledge*<sup>63</sup> and which, perhaps under Schelling's influence, only becomes an important theme in Fichte's position later.<sup>64</sup> Another is with respect to a philosophy of art, which is wholly lacking in Fichte, but which is prominently featured in the sixth and final part of Schelling's *System*. Finally, there is the concept of the absolute, or absolute identity, which is described as the harmony between the subjective and the objective, or again between subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>65</sup>

Kant's Copernican insight can be summarized as the claim that a necessary condition of knowledge is for knower and known, knowledge and its object, to coincide. The idea of identity, suggested by Kant's Copernican turn, is central to Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*. Fichte uses the term "absolute self" (*das absolute Ich*) to refer to the human subject understood theoretically, or in isolation from the prevailing social context. It has

already been noted that Fichte replaces Kant's abstract conception of the subject by finite human beings. Schelling undoes this Fichtean move in returning to a conception of subjectivity closer to the Kantian model. In his successor conception of the absolute, Schelling transforms Fichte's conception of finite human being into an abstract principle intended to function as the ultimate source of subjectivity, objectivity, and their interrelation.

### HEGEL THE CRITICAL KANTIAN

In referring to Hegel as a Kantian, I am disagreeing with observers who regard Hegel as basically opposed to Kant. Hegel is sometimes understood as if on any given issue his view could be "deduced" or at least inferred by negating Kant's view of it. This seems to me a mistaken way of comprehending a thinker, who, although frequently and deeply critical of Kant, is constantly concerned to take the critical philosophy beyond the place its author left it. If Kant is a critical philosopher, then Hegel is a critical Kantian, concerned to realize the promise of the critical philosophy, if necessary by neglecting, even rejecting, the letter of the critical philosophy in favor of its spirit, which he interprets mainly, but not only, through Fichte's eyes. It is an understatement to say that Hegel is one of the most difficult thinkers to comprehend in the entire Western philosophical tradition. Although he died in 1831, and despite intensive discussion in an enormous secondary literature, there is arguably not more agreement about his position now than when he left the scene. Right-wing and left-wing interpretations, roughly theological and secular approaches to his position, continue to dispute his heritage. The main difference between them seems to be that Hegel's right-wing students celebrate a supposed preference for theology over philosophy and everything else, and his left-wing

students agree with his right-wing students about his theological bent, but find this a reason to criticize and finally reject his position.

There is much disagreement in the literature about what “idealism” means for Hegel. According to Manfred Frank, who aligns his reading of romanticism on a view he attributes to Hegel, “idealism” means that consciousness is self-contained, hence must be wholly explained through itself, as opposed to the early romantic conviction that this is not possible for the being of the subject (*Selbstsein*).<sup>66</sup> This view is problematic, since it suggests idealism emerges only with Hegel. It is further doubtful that Hegel, or indeed any idealist worthy of the name, believes that the contents of consciousness can wholly be explained through consciousness itself.<sup>67</sup> According to Joseph McCarney, for Hegel “idealism” means that the real is rational.<sup>68</sup> Certainly Hegel is committed to this thesis in the realm of history, though this way of reading his view tends to obscure its relation, through the Copernican turn, to Kant’s ahistorical position, to Fichte’s initially ahistorical and later historical view, and to Schelling’s eschatological approach to history.

Instead of striving to capture Hegel’s view, or even his idealism, in a single pithy sentence, it is preferable to turn to his reception of the preceding tradition, on which he seeks to build. Kant is influenced by a number of prior thinkers, including, in no particular order, Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, Berkeley, Hume, and others. Yet on the surface he simply dismisses all prior philosophy as dogmatic, hence uncritical, unworthy of the appellation “philosophy.” Fichte seems not to have known much about the history of philosophy, about which Schelling had unusually detailed knowledge. In Hegel, systematic and historical concerns come together in a systematic analysis of the main problems as they emerge and develop in the entire Western philosophical tradition. Hegel enjoys an extremely detailed

grasp of the philosophical tradition. He further draws attention to the continuity between the history of philosophy and philosophy itself. He is arguably more concerned than anyone else since Aristotle to take into account prior views. And he is more interested than any other thinker to build his position on prior philosophical achievements.

Hegel's position initially arises out of his reading of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling and is only later extended to the entire history of Western philosophy. Hegel, who remains in dialogue with Kant in all his writings, is constantly concerned—he reads Fichte and Schelling as engaged in the same enterprise—in making good on the promissory note issued in the critical philosophy. In that sense, at least, he is a Kantian, but a very critical one, for whom the critical philosophy, despite its claims, is according to its own criteria dogmatic. Hegel consistently judges the critical philosophy through its alleged critical capacity not merely to assert but further to demonstrate its claims to knowledge. For Hegel, who shares a commitment to “idealism” with Kant and the other great German idealists, Kant merely asserts, but in fact fails, to provide “authentic” idealism. He consistently depicts Kant's position as an incomplete project to which Fichte and Schelling later contribute, but which, at the turn of the nineteenth century, remains to be completed on critical grounds.

Like Kant, Hegel denies immediate knowledge in indexing claims to know to a conceptual framework. Hegel's claim that the deduction of the categories is only achieved by Fichte<sup>69</sup> amounts to rejecting Kant's own strenuous, but obscure efforts to do so as simply insufficient without, however, rejecting the basic claim that a critical philosophy needs in fact to carry out this task. That is certainly one of the aims of Hegel's effort to work out a philosophical logic.

Hegel's position is often misdescribed as absolute idealism.

In fact, a number of different concepts of the absolute run throughout German idealism. Hegel's little-understood conception of the absolute builds on his reading of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Kant uses the term "absolute" to refer to what is valid without limitations of any kind.<sup>70</sup> Hegel objects that Kant's categories are merely static, hence ill-adapted to cognize the absolute. In an epistemological context, Hegel obviously understands the term "absolute" not in the more familiar religious manner but rather in a less familiar, wholly secular, epistemological sense. As concerns epistemology, the absolute emerges as the consequence of thinking through the process of knowledge to the end. Hegel reads Fichte as the latter understands himself, that is, as attempting to make good on the critical philosophy, but according to Hegel, as finally failing to do so. For Hegel, Fichte bases his position on intellectual intuition, pure thinking itself, or pure self-consciousness, of the absolute as the identity of subject and object.<sup>71</sup> Hegel objects to what he perceives as a residual dualism in Fichte between theory and practice, between what is (*Sein*) and what ought to be (*Sollen*). He criticizes Fichtean idealism as subjective, or dogmatic,<sup>72</sup> in insisting on, but failing to demonstrate, the tension between philosophical reflection and ordinary consciousness, or between the subjective ego and the objective ego, or finally between knowledge and experience. In other words, as Hegel also says, it is not possible to demonstrate the theoretical identity of subject and object through a causal relation.<sup>73</sup>

Ostensibly the *Differenzschrift* is intended to vindicate Schelling's claims against Fichte. In fact, Hegel is equally critical of both. Schelling, like Fichte, defends intellectual intuition as a basic philosophical principle. He surpasses Fichte's stress on the subjective identity of subject and object in positing both subject and object as an identical subject-object from the perspective of an absolute which combines identity and noniden-

tity,<sup>74</sup> or transcendental philosophy and philosophy of nature. Since this absolute, or, as Schelling also says, indifference point, only suspends, but does not synthesize, the opposition between these two sciences, it is merely negative. In prefiguring his later break with Schelling over the latter's conception of a featureless absolute, Hegel proposes to unite subject and object, knower and known, freedom and determinism in preserving difference within the unity of unity and difference. In anticipating the position he will describe in detail in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807), Hegel says that this structured unity is displayed in different ways and on different levels in art, religion, and philosophical speculation.<sup>75</sup>

For Hegel, speculative philosophy is essentially the science of the absolute. Philosophical science, which differs from other sciences in presupposing nothing, is intrinsically circular.<sup>76</sup> Philosophy thinks the identity of identity and difference, which Hegel depicts, not as immediately given, but as the result of thinking through conscious experience in a series of stages culminating in absolute knowing (*absolute Wissen*), or in a word in conceptual analysis of what we mean by "knowing" in a philosophical sense, as distinguished from absolute knowledge. Unlike the critical philosophy, and unlike its rationalist and empiricist predecessors, philosophical reflection, in which speculation takes itself as its object, has nothing to do with making infeasible cognitive claims. It rather has the task of thinking through human experience from the vantage point afforded by the present historical moment.

Kantian constructivism is studied from time to time under the heading of the Copernican revolution. Hegelian constructivism, which seems never to have been studied in detail, and which we can only begin to sketch here, is an enormous, complex topic, well worth a separate monograph. Kant's dual commitment to representationalism and constructivism often makes

it difficult to discern where his loyalties lie. Writing in Kant's wake, Hegel's allegiance is more easily discerned. A simple way to describe the difference is to say that Hegel generalizes Kant's constructivist epistemological thesis across the board, that is, everywhere or virtually everywhere. In Hegel, epistemological construction is germane to ethics, politics, history, and all other facets of human experience. More than Fichte and Schelling, Hegel's take on Kant explicitly centers on the constructive thrust of the critical philosophy, including its later developments in Fichte and Schelling. Constructivism pervades Hegel's writings from one end to the other, from his phenomenological approach to knowledge advanced in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, his first major book, to the theory of the modern state described in the *Philosophy of Right* (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, 1821), his last major work. In this and other writings, Hegel consistently follows Kant's claim that idealism turns on the speculative identity of subject and object.

In the critical philosophy, this identity is provided by the categories, or rules of the understanding, which Kant obscurely endeavors to deduce. As a result of Fichte's anthropological reworking of the subject, constructivism shifts from the a priori to the a posteriori plane. It has already been noted that Kant, who is ambivalent about the distinction between representationalism and constructivism, understands constructivism as an a priori deduction. In clarifying the interest of constructivism as a replacement for representationalism, Fichte and the later post-Kantian German idealists understand the epistemological object as an a posteriori development in historical time and space.

Hegelian constructivism is marked by a deep, pervasive concern with history in all its many forms, which is further deepened and also refocused through an economic prism in Marx.



Hegel initially raises this theme in the preface to the *Differenzschrift*, where he commends Fichte for identifying the speculative principle of the unity of subject and object. A constructivist approach to knowledge is present everywhere in Hegel's writings, to begin with in the *Phenomenology*, a book which addresses a dazzling array of themes centering on a post-Kantian, but still idealist, no longer a priori, hence a posteriori reworking of the problem of knowledge. The widespread but erroneous conviction that Hegel is unconcerned with the problem of knowledge, or that this problem is anything less than a central theme in his position, or that he ever abandons the effort to arrive at objective cognition in favor of merely subjective claims to know, hence falling decisively below the level of the critical philosophy, is ingredient in the still prevalent right-wing reading of Hegel according to which his thought is inseparable from a Christian religious commitment. In fact Hegel is directly and deeply concerned with the problem of knowledge in all its forms throughout his entire corpus.

Hegel describes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the science of the experience of consciousness. Hegel differs from others interested in epistemology in rejecting the familiar dualistic approach to truth and falsity in favor of levels of knowledge. The main theme of the *Phenomenology* can be depicted as philosophical exposition of levels of knowing running from cognition in general to absolute knowing, his designation for philosophy in his specific sense. Fichte, who typically poses as a seamless Kantian, in fact intentionally or otherwise leaves Kant's transcendental philosophy behind in rejecting Kant's abstract analysis of the most general conditions of knowledge in favor of a pragmatic history of consciousness.<sup>77</sup> The *Phenomenology* describes the road to knowledge in the full sense in the form of a historical process with no preconditions and no beginning

point—bereft, hence, of any Archimedean point in a Cartesian sense of the term—that merely begins.

Hegel provides an indispensable overview of his theory in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. Kant's Copernican turn amounts to the claim, as noted above, that in order to know an object, the subject and object, or knower and known, must coincide, or be identical. The required cognitive identity might be given directly, say through some sort of direct, or immediate knowledge, or constructed in some way. Following Kant, who also refuses direct knowledge,<sup>78</sup> Hegel argues for the construction of the required identity in and through an ongoing cognitive process in which truth would be reached if and only if subject and object, knower and known, freedom and necessity coincided. In an important passage, he writes: "Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, to which it at the same time relates itself, or, as it is expressed, it is something for consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this relating, or of the being of something for a consciousness, is knowing. But we distinguish this being-for-another from being-in-itself; whatever is related to knowing is also distinguished from it, and posited as being also outside of this relationship; this side of this in-itself is called truth."<sup>79</sup>

In this brief, enigmatic statement Hegel describes the main elements of his version of a phenomenological approach to knowledge. The cognitive subject is aware of, but also distinguishes itself from, an object. By "object" is meant no more than what is given in experience. Hegel is uninterested in the cognitive status of the Kantian noumenon, or thing in itself. "Knowing" is not, as Kant suggested in the Herz letter, in any sense based on a relation of a cognitive subject to a mind-independent object, which is unknowable. It is rather a relation of the same subject to an object only as it appears within consciousness.

There is a further distinction between the cognitive object as it appears in consciousness and as it can be supposed to be outside consciousness, in independence of our awareness of it. Hegel calls the former knowing and the latter truth.

According to Hegel, claims to know are adjudicated through simple comparison between our concept, or theory, of the object and the object given within consciousness. "Consciousness provides its own criterion to itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction just made falls within it."<sup>80</sup> In a sense, the knower merely passively assists in the development of the cognitive process. The knower, who is present as the cognitive process unfolds, is always equipped with the distinction between the subject and the object. Now in this process there are only two possible outcomes. Either the "theory" provisionally adopted with respect to the cognitive object on the basis of experience is sustained when it is tested in the light of further experience, since our cognitive expectations are met, that is, we in fact experience what our theory predicts will happen. In that case, subject and object, theory and practice, concept and object coincide; and the cognitive process has come to an end. There is nothing further to be known, since the theory is adequate with respect to its cognitive object. In the second case, concept and cognitive object fail to coincide since in one or more ways the theory we are working with fails to agree with, hence falls short of, the object as given in experience. In a word the theory simply fails the test of experience.

The most natural way to construe Hegel's theory is as a claim that cognition is a process in which various theories formulated in response to experience are tried out and subsequently reformulated in reaction to an ongoing series of experiences generating successive theories and successive cognitive objects on the road to knowledge and, as its *terminus ad quem*, truth. In

holding that theories that in practice fail the test of experience must be modified, Hegel follows, and is followed by, many other thinkers, in fact by anyone who takes an a posteriori approach to knowledge. The specific difference which separates Hegel from most other epistemological theorists consists in his insistence on the context-relatedness, hence the instability of the cognitive object. It is then not the case that for Hegel the knowing process consists in formulating different theories about a single, fixed, mind-independent external world, which is, in the consecrated phrase, the way the world is as it is. Hegel's approach dispenses with any assumptions about the relation of a given theory to the way the world is or even that there is a way it is. It is rather the case, according to Hegel, that when we alter a theory in order to improve it, adjusting it to "fit" what is observed in experience, then the object of the theory, what one seeks to know, also changes. "If the comparison shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another, it seems that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object. But in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object; as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge."<sup>81</sup>

In leaving any vestige of the old representational approach to knowledge behind, Hegel suggests there is no way to know we know a mind-independent object. We can only affirm we know what is given in conscious experience against the background of one or another theory. Hegel, who has an unearned, highly prejudicial reputation of simply ignoring experience, insists, on the contrary, that we must constantly update our theories to take account of what is given in consciousness. The object we seek to know, and which depends on and changes as the theory about it changes, is literally "constructed" by those who seek to know it. The cognitive object does not preexist

but is rather constructed by the cognitive subject as a condition of knowing it. That is, the cognitive object or objects are literally constructed by us in our role as cognitive subjects as we seek to know and to expand our knowledge of ourselves and our surroundings through an ongoing process in which successive theories are tried out in successive phases of conscious experience.

Hegelian constructivism is a variation on the view expressed earlier by Fichte's supposedly orthodox reading, but in fact highly creative rereading of the critical philosophy. We recall that for Fichte, the basis of human reality is an interaction between the subject and something external to it, which, since it lies outside of any possible cognition, simply cannot be known. Hegel develops this Fichtean insight in his account of human reality as given in conscious experience through the interaction between subjects and something outside them, the mind-independent, but unknowable world. Hegel implicitly distinguishes between the mind-independent world, with which we interact, but which cannot be known, and human reality, which, since it is given in consciousness, can be and is known with no unrecognized residue or conceptual surd. This interaction gives rise to the contents of experience, which are constructed by human beings in their capacity as cognitive subjects, verified through further experience, and, if necessary modified and then verified again through still further experience.

Hegel constantly develops various aspects of his constructivist approach throughout his writings in rejecting representationalism, or any claim to know how a representation relates to the mind-independent external world, in favor of concepts in which a distinction within unity is preserved between knower and known, subject and object. Thus later in the *Phenomenology*, he writes: "For in thinking, the object does not present itself in representations but in concepts, i.e. in a distinct being-in-

itself or intrinsic being, conscious being becomes immediately aware that this is not anything distinct from itself.”<sup>82</sup> As early as the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel already regards Fichte’s emphasis on the identity of subject and object as correctly capturing Kant’s Copernican claim that we can only know what we in some sense construct. Hegel, who regards the proposed identity as central to what he calls the idealist thesis, works out a further version of the idea that knowledge depends on the identity of subject and object, knower and known. In the critical philosophy, Kant analyzes knowledge on the basis of the understanding, in limiting the cognitive role of reason to grasping the conditions of knowledge through experience while rejecting the intrinsic tendency to seek knowledge beyond the bounds of experience. In reacting against Kant, Hegel rehabilitates reason as a cognitive source, for instance when he describes it as “certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is none other than itself; its thinking is directly actuality, and thus its relationship to the latter is that of idealism.”<sup>83</sup>

Hegel treats the general theme of the identity in unity of subject and object presupposed in Kant’s Copernican turn in detail in a series of passages on idealism. In the very next paragraph, Hegel writes that “Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality; thus does idealism express its concept.”<sup>84</sup> Hegel continues his exploration of constructivism in later writings. In the first part of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (*Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1817, 1827, 1830), he contrasts a representative approach, based on understanding and featuring a fixed dualism between knower and known, which seeks a correct representation through finite determinations, and the unlimited grasp of the object on the basis of “free thinking.” Unlike a representational approach, in the conceptual alternative “the development of the content, or of the subject matters of special parts of philosophical science, falls di-

rectly within that development of consciousness which seems at first to be restricted to what is formal.”<sup>85</sup> And in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel restates the idealist thesis in the claim that in work one crystallizes one’s being and activity in the form of actuality.<sup>86</sup>

### MARX, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND GERMAN IDEALISM

I will bring this rapid account of German idealism to a close with some very brief remarks about Marx’s controversial relation to German idealism. There is a persistent but mistaken view in the literature, accepted by Marxists interested in Marx, anti-Marxists opposed to him, and non-Marxists who are often merely indifferent, that in virtue of his critique of Hegel, Marx leaves philosophy behind. Since this myth is most strongly supported by Marxism, one can say that in this respect Marx is a victim of the prevailing Marxist interpretation of his writings.

There is no reason to deny that Marx was critical of Hegel and (Hegelian) idealism. Marx is critical of Hegel in various places, in most detail in the *Manuscripts of 1844*. In the famous remark in the afterword to the second edition of *Capital*,<sup>87</sup> he obscurely describes his position as the inversion of Hegel’s. Yet Engels’ simplistic depiction of the distinction between idealism and materialism has mistakenly led generations of Marxists to contrast a materialist position they attribute to Marx with (Hegelian) idealism, and, in extreme cases, with philosophy of any kind.<sup>88</sup>

I will come back to the relation of Marx to idealism below. Suffice it to say here that it is wrong to see Marx as clearly or even unclearly breaking with Hegelian idealism, or intending to break with idealism in general, either through his specific interest in political economy, his general concern with practice, or in any other way. It is correct to see Marx as building on prior

thinkers. These include Aristotle—Marx's position is sometimes regarded as left-wing Aristotelianism—as well as Kant, particularly his view of constructivism; Fichte as concerns the conception of the human subject;<sup>89</sup> and especially Hegel, to whose position Marx's debt is varied and profound.

Yet that does not mean that Marx, who is a singularly important, highly original thinker, agrees with his predecessors. Important thinkers always change the terms of the preceding debate. They propose new solutions for old problems, address new concerns, and develop novel concepts. It is correct to see Marx, who was unusually well read, as building upon a series of earlier thinkers, including philosophers, especially Hegel, while introducing important innovations. Marx works out a rigorous, systematic position combining a critique of Hegel (and prior philosophy); a theory of modern industrial society or the capitalism of the day; and a critique of orthodox political economy.

A key difference between Marx and Hegel lies in significantly different approaches to property (*Eigentum*). In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel proposes a legal framework in which freedom is both partly secured by right (*Recht*), or law, as well as constituting the goal to be realized in and through a social context constructed by human beings.<sup>90</sup> Hegel consistently treats property from a legal angle of vision. Marx, who notes that property is both a condition of, and an impediment to, the realization of human freedom, treats property from an economic angle of vision. This single, deep difference in their respective approaches enables Marx to do three related things: he criticizes what he regards as Hegel's failure to understand the economic functioning of property in modern industrial society; he criticizes modern political economy for failing to understand, hence to criticize, the many obstacles to realizing human social potential in contemporary society; and he formulates a rival theory of capitalism on the basis of a concept of human activity.



Marx's position builds on the Hegelian form of the constructivist insight running throughout the length and breadth of German idealism. In a discussion of the alienation of property, and following Locke, Hegel remarks that property, which belongs to someone who has made it his own, can for that reason be ceded to another. "The reason I can alienate my property is that it is mine only in so far as I put my will into it."<sup>91</sup> After stating a legal view of property, he goes on to describe an economic view of property as it functions in the process of meeting one's real human needs in a market-oriented economy. In alienating physical and mental capacities to someone else, an individual acquires what Hegel calls an external relation to himself. Hegel is referring to the productive process in which things are made by someone but appropriated by someone else. He clarifies his view by stating that what one is assumes concrete form in what one makes. More precisely, in making a thing, anything, what is made is literally oneself in objectified, external form. It is because a person literally takes the objective and objectified form of a thing that someone can be alienated in and through what one does. In a passage which has already been referred to more than once, and which could well have come from the writings of Marx, his most brilliant student, Hegel writes: "By alienating the whole of my time, as crystallized in my work, and everything I produced, I would be making into another's property the substance of my being, my universal activity and actuality, my personality."<sup>92</sup>

Hegel's basic insight, which Marx quickly takes over, presupposes a distinction between objectification, in which human individuals literally concretize themselves in the form of a product, and alienation as following from the dualistic separation between the subject which produces and the object produced.<sup>93</sup> This insight is basic to Marx's understanding of modern industrial society. A very simple way to understand Marx's relation

to Hegel, which restates the differences between them noted above, is to point out that Marx follows the constructivist aspect of Hegel's economic analysis in developing a critique of Hegel. This critique, which is threefold, concerns Hegel's supposed neglect of the economic dimension of the modern world; then a constructivist model of modern industrial society as merely one phase in the development of human society; and finally a critique of orthodox political economy as failing to grasp the historical dimension of economic reality.

Though Marx is critical of Hegel, his own theory of alienation generalizes Hegel's view that individuals objectify themselves in products, culture, and other forms of productive activity as the basis of his own constructivist theory of modern industrial society. Alienation is the result of the objectification of workers in and through their work in the form of a product, and that product literally is that person or persons in external, concretized form, which, in virtue of its objectification, can be alienated from them. Marx derives the concept of objectification from Hegel further as the basis of his own controversial labor theory of value. In building on the views of value from as early as Aristotle onward, and more directly on the discussion since Locke and Adam Smith, Marx works out a theory of surplus value based on the appropriation of the worker in that part of the product which is allegedly not paid for. Marx elaborates a full-blown constructivist theory of modern industrial society in which individual workers produce commodities, or products to be sold in the market place; themselves as workers; the social relations between them, and between them and nature; and finally society as a whole. This systematic analysis of modern society, in which workers can be said to be "identical" with their products under the conditions of externality, or difference, is in one sense strikingly original, perhaps still the best theory of the modern world we possess. But from another angle of vision, it is only

another form of the basic constructivist insight, which, under Kant's influence, runs throughout all later German idealism.

### NEO-KANTIANISM AND IDEALISM

A few remarks on neo-Kantianism will serve to address the evolution of idealism in the period roughly from the end of German idealism up to the onset of British idealism after the middle of the nineteenth century, with which German idealism partly overlaps. Neo-Kantianism is neither a specific form of idealism, nor illustrative of idealism except in a general sense. In neo-Kantianism, we encounter a qualified return to Kant more concerned with applying Kantian ideas, often to specific problems or concerns, than with rethinking a specifically idealist approach to knowledge.

Neo-Kantianism is a vast topic that can be understood in many different ways. It has been suggested that in Germany in the last third of the nineteenth century approximately half of the philosophers were neo-Kantians and that there were no less than seven different forms of neo-Kantianism.<sup>94</sup> Even when it is understood narrowly, neo-Kantianism is a very large topic that is studied in a specialized literature.<sup>95</sup>

The rise of neo-Kantianism is linked to the decline of post-Kantian idealism after Hegel. This decline could not be avoided since there was no figure on the horizon with his breadth and strength, hence no one able to take his place. Hegel synthesized different impulses that, after his passing, could no longer be reconciled, such as the crucial relation of philosophy to religion. These impulses, which quickly became explicit in the right-wing, or religious, and the left-wing, or secular, readings of his position, led to the rapid decline of German idealism after Hegel. Other, further difficulties were specific factors in the rise of neo-Kantianism.

Among these difficulties, three appear particularly important: the post-Kantian reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the relation of German idealism to science, and the post-Kantian transformation of the problem of knowledge. The appearance of the *Critique of Pure Reason* gave rise to a discussion, which has never since ceased, about the proper way to interpret it. This difficulty arose during Kant's lifetime, when, in reaction to Reinhold and others, Fichte convinced the young Schelling and the young Hegel that he not only best among many other claimants, but further that he alone, understood Kant; and it continues in our time. Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 1929) counts as an effort to circumvent the intervening discussion by returning directly to Kant.<sup>96</sup>

The further development of modern science and the accompanying view of it as providing an all-embracing approach to knowledge are further factors in the turn away from German idealism.<sup>97</sup> Some observers believe Kant understood science, but that, as Aliotta claims,<sup>98</sup> idealism is a reaction against science that the idealists did not understand.<sup>99</sup> The widespread conviction that post-Kantian German idealism did not understand science, which could, however, be grasped through Kant, led a series of post-Kantians to apply Kantian insights to science. Lotze and then Lange opposed a materialistic approach to scientific explanation. A full-scale approach to science a century after Kant's passing from a recognizably Kantian perspective was later worked out by Cassirer.

After Kant, epistemology did not cease. It was rather transformed from a decontextualized, a priori investigation of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge whatsoever into a contextualized investigation of human knowledge against the social and historical background. In reaction to this transformation of the critical philosophy, a number of later thinkers

sought to recapture Kant's original approach to knowledge or at least to return to forms of epistemology closer to what Kant had in mind, for instance in the variations on Kantian theory of knowledge worked out by Zeller and the neo-Kantian Cohen.

Since neo-Kantianism is composed of a series of different readings of Kant, the neo-Kantians are engaged in a dispute with the post-Kantian German idealists about the proper interpretation of the critical philosophy. Those who react to Kant are not necessarily idealist in any ordinary sense at all. Thinkers influenced, even strongly influenced, by Kant, but who do not adhere to recognizable forms of idealism, include Heidegger, who is attracted to Kant and Schelling, though not to idealism; the early Vienna Circle positivists, who, except for Carnap, who may or may not have had idealist tendencies, were on the whole distinctly unfriendly to idealism; and a whole series of contemporary analytic thinkers who, following Strawson, read Kant (and increasingly Hegel) as an unusual kind of empiricist while rejecting idealism of all kinds.

Post-Kantian German idealism, which can be understood as an ongoing effort by many hands to continue to work out and to complete the critical philosophy, remains Kantian. Yet even before Hegel had left the scene, a number of thinkers, who believed this effort was misguided, were concerned to return behind post-Kantian German idealism to Kant. The return to Kant, which is central to all forms of neo-Kantianism, was already beginning during Hegel's heyday in Berlin in the writings of Schelling and Schopenhauer.

Schelling, who lived on until 1854, strongly refuted Hegel after the latter's death in 1831. Schopenhauer was deeply critical of post-Kantian German idealism but less critical of Kant. Speaking broadly, the later Schelling, who meanwhile had left post-Kantian German idealism behind, contributes to the idea that the movement Kant called into being sharply diverged

from its progenitor's intention, and Schopenhauer opened a wide-ranging attack on German idealism from Kant to Hegel while continuing to defend a form of Kantianism. Together they weakened the attraction of post-Kantian German idealism, to which Schelling had earlier belonged, in opening the way to a qualified return to Kant which later took shape as neo-Kantianism.

Schelling's attack on Hegel was provoked by the latter's criticism. In the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, playing on Schelling's concern to show "how that night of the Absolute can be turned into a day for knowledge,"<sup>100</sup> Hegel famously compares his friend's view of the absolute to the night in which all cows are black.<sup>101</sup> Hegel, who was aware that this passage might not be taken lightly, attempted to defuse the problem in another letter in suggesting that he is curious to learn Schelling's reaction to the book: "In the Preface you will not find that I have been too hard on the shallowness that makes much mischief with your forms in particular and degrades your science into bare formalism."<sup>102</sup>

Schelling was obviously not thrilled by this weak effort to circumvent a basic disagreement between Hegel and himself. In his reply, he seizes on a pretext to draw a distinction between his ideas and the use made of them by others, one of whom was clearly Hegel: "Insofar as you yourself mention the polemical part of the Preface, given my own justly measured opinion of myself I would have to think too little of myself to apply this polemic to my own person. It must therefore, as you have expressed in your letter, apply it only to further bad use of my ideas and to those who parrot them without understanding, although in this writing itself the distinction is not made."<sup>103</sup>

It is hardly surprising, in view of Hegel's sharp, humiliating rejection of a basic concept in Schelling's theory, that with this letter correspondence between the two came to an end. The

feeling of betrayal must have remained in Schelling's mind. Years later in his Munich lectures delivered after Hegel's death, he sharply criticized Hegel's theory as essentially negative. In *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (*Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*), Schelling defends his position against Hegel while refuting the latter's views.<sup>104</sup> His critique of Hegel is presented in a rather unsystematic series of remarks that, although often insightful, do not justify its main claim.

Schelling maintains, correctly enough, *inter alia* that reality is more than merely reason (147, 559), and that the correct approach is to begin in nature and not from a mere concept (149, 562). Hegel's theory is especially problematic as concerns the transition from being through nothing to becoming at the beginning of the *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1812–16), where supposedly

- he substitutes thought for the concept (138, 548)
- he provides only the appearance of necessity (138–9, 548; and 143, 554)
- he proposes a concept of being in general that is merely thought (139, 549)
- he is unable to think reality other than outside concepts (146, 558)
- he proposes a self-contradictory view of nature as both within and without logic (153, 567–8)
- he provides an illicit transformation of true logical relationships into real relationships (160, 577).

These different criticisms center on the charge that Hegel illegitimately substitutes concepts for reality. Kierkegaard, Schelling's former student, later makes a version of the same point in famously accusing Hegel of being unable to think existence within the confines of his system.<sup>105</sup> If this is true, then Schelling's critique of Hegel amounts to the claim that Hegel

is himself guilty of the problem he mistakenly claims to discern in Schelling.

Schelling's objection presupposes his distinction between negative and positive forms of philosophy. Negative philosophy, which is illustrated by Hegel's system, is merely logical. Hegel, who desired to realize the spirit of the critical philosophy, realized its letter as well. His theory moves within concepts on the a priori plane without ever making the transition to the external world. He is himself guilty of the subjective idealism that he criticizes in Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi. He has further failed to understand Schelling's theory, hence failed to grasp the move beyond Fichte. Finally, Hegel misrepresents his theory by denying its merely negative nature, as in his assertion that it "leaves nothing outside itself" (135, 544).

Positive philosophy, which is illustrated by Schelling's system, and which relates philosophically to existence (95, 491; 133, 541; 134, 542; 156, 571; etc.), supplements, or completes, the philosophical movement begun in Kant. All philosophy consists in two moments: a negative moment, which is purely logical, and is prior to experience; and a positive moment, which is not logical, but actual or real, and engages the external world.

This distinction implies a tension, even a contradiction between the logical and the phenomenological sides of Hegel's position expounded respectively in the *Science of Logic* and in the *Phenomenology*. Schelling, who does not pursue this point,<sup>106</sup> suggests he in fact does what Hegel only mistakenly claims to do. In reference to Hegel's theory, he writes:

The philosophy which has just been presented, which could rely on universal assent if it presented itself as a science of thought or of reason and presented God, whom it reached at the end, as the merely *logical* result of its earlier meditations, ac-



quired, by assuming the appearance of the opposite, a completely false reputation, which even contradicted its original thought. . . . Now one might hope that this philosophy really would withdraw to within this boundary, would declare itself as negative, merely as logical philosophy when Hegel established precisely as the first demand on philosophy that it should withdraw into pure thinking, and that it should have as sole immediate object the pure concept.<sup>107</sup>

In suggesting that knowledge of God can only be a logical result in the context of negative, or logical, philosophy, Schelling identifies an alleged limitation of Hegel's theory, which is allegedly confined only to the plane of logic. This reading of Hegel's theory depends on separating the *Science of Logic* from the *Phenomenology*, in effect in taking the part for the whole. Yet the *Science of Logic* is neither autonomous nor separate from the *Phenomenology*, since for Hegel the path to the *Science of Logic* necessarily leads through the *Phenomenology*. Hegel is certainly not suggesting that God can be known simply through concepts. This suggestion would be like accepting the ontological proof of God's existence that he rejects in Descartes and in Anselm. Hegel rather maintains—that is the point of the chapter on religion in the *Phenomenology*—that since religion operates merely through mere representations (*Vorstellungen*), as opposed to concepts (*Begriffe*), which belong to philosophy, the truths of religion cannot be known by it but can only be known on the philosophical plane.

It may well be that negative philosophy demands a completion in positive philosophy, which makes the necessary transition to reality. Yet Schelling shows neither that Hegel's theory is incapable of this transition, nor that his own theory reaches

reality. Schelling differentiates between Hegel's theory and his own as follows: "The difference between the Hegelian and the earlier system as far as the Absolute is concerned is only this. The earlier system does not have a double becoming, a logical and a real one, but, starting out from the abstract subject, from the subject in its abstraction, it is in nature with the first step, and it does not afterwards need a further explanation of the transition from the logical into the real" (149, 562).

This claim is doubly problematic. First, it is clear that Hegel begins from experience. In that sense, he, like Kant, is an empiricist. At most, the difficulty to which Schelling refers exists with respect to the *Science of Logic*, but not with respect to the system as a whole. Second, the difficulty concerning the transition from logic to reality clearly arises within Schelling's own theory. He is unable to elucidate the transition from the pure subject to reality, in a word unable to explain how "the absolute subject, which is as nothing, makes itself into *something*, into a bound, limited, inhibited being" (117, 519). This inability should not be surprising, since Schelling's objection to the Hegelian system amounts to rejecting Hegel's preference for being in favor of God. Yet neither Schelling nor anyone else has ever suggested that there is a rational manner to expound the mysteries of divine being.

Schopenhauer, who was also an opponent of Hegel, famously (and ludicrously) scheduled his courses at the same time as Hegel's, which were far more popular. Schopenhauer was deeply critical of post-Kantian German idealism and critical, but less so, of Kant. His position arises out of his dissertation, *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (*Über die vierfache Wurzel vom zureichenden Grunde unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der dort genannten und daraus abgeleiteten Argumente zur Kritik Hegels*, 1813). Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason is roughly the view that there is in each case a reason which ex-

plains why something is as it is. This principle, which can be interpreted along the lines of efficient causality, is arguably the basis of Kant's defense of causality against Hume. Schopenhauer's main work, *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt as Wille und Vorstellung*, 1819), introduces a "voluntarist" element that influenced Kierkegaard. The result is a modified Kantianism, incorporating an irrational conception of the will, which is unlike Fichte's conception of striving and sharply different from Kant's concept of the moral will wholly subordinated to reason.

Schopenhauer's criticism of Kant follows the criticism of G. E. Schulze (pseudonym Aenesidemus), a contemporary anti-Kantian skeptic, with whom he studied. Like Jacobi, Maimon, and many others, Schulze objects to Kant's inconsistency in making knowledge depend on a mind-independent object, which is independent of, but functions as, the cause of experience. According to Schulze, to invoke a thing in itself as the cause of sensation amounts to applying causality, which for Kant is a category of the understanding, beyond its legitimate scope. In rejecting Kant's causal explanation, Schopenhauer, who follows Schulze, denies we can explain the source of the preconscious given through an unknown and unknowable transcendental object.

Kant, who famously limits reason to make room for faith, employs a wholly secular form of reason. Following Kant, Schopenhauer objects to any effort to rely on proofs of God's existence as an explanatory factor. His conviction that this is the case for Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel now seems incorrect, but reflects the prevailing view, as German idealism was unfolding, that Hegel develops a right-wing Hegelian position based on what is sometimes satirized as a theory of history recording God's march through the world.

Speaking generally, Schelling and Schopenhauer weaken the

epistemological theme running through German idealism and loosen the link to Kant. Yet Schopenhauer retains a connection to Kantian constructivism through the idea that what we experience is, as he puts it, constituted by forms of objectification of the will.

Lotze is a third figure who helped to prepare the return behind German idealism to Kant. A dominant thinker in his time but rarely read today, Lotze exemplifies the new academic philosophy of the period. Lotze, who was influenced by Fichte, is usually credited with assisting “the rejection of Hegel and Absolute Idealism within the bounds of academic philosophy.”<sup>108</sup> His break with Hegel is said to have occurred because in his opinion the latter “identified thought with reality, and converted the rich, living world of concrete facts into a fixed system of abstract categories.”<sup>109</sup> This objection turns against Hegel the point the latter makes at the beginning of the *Differenzschrift* against Kant. After breaking with Hegel, Lotze took up epistemological criticism of the foundations of Kantian idealism. Like Kant, Lotze remains an epistemological skeptic. In *Microkosmos*, he claims that “What everything is in itself . . . its true nature is by which it exists . . . this may remain forever inaccessible to thought.”<sup>110</sup>

It is unclear how Lotze should be classified. He is said to favor theist idealism, or the theory of the world ground in which all things find their unity; he is also said to favor teleological idealism, or even realist idealism. He is sometimes classified with Eugen Dühring among the Neo-Critics. Dühring, a well known anti-Semite, was interested in philosophy and economics. He emphasized the difference between thought and reality. He reviewed Marx’s *Capital* and was active among Social Democrats. He is mainly known today for Engels’ strong refutation of his theories.<sup>111</sup> Dühring and the Neo-Critics, who object to the effects of the so-called “deluge of romanti-

cism,” return to the principle of criticism while paying more attention to the emerging scientific view than their idealist predecessors.

Lotze studied natural science, especially medicine, as well as philosophy, obtaining in rapid succession both a doctoral and a medical degree. He provided a useful counterweight to Schelling’s often very wild speculations on science while going beyond the limits of Hegel’s own more restrained treatment of this domain. His main contribution lies in reconciling romantic idealism, which he criticized, with emerging views of mechanistic science. At the time, materialism was emerging as an important philosophical position. Kant, who was opposed to materialism, naturalism, and fatalism, considered materialism to be a psychological concept applied to nature.<sup>112</sup> Fichte considered it to be the only possible alternative to idealism.<sup>113</sup> Lotze, who distinguished between mechanism and materialism, was especially concerned with the nature and limits of a mechanistic approach. In this sense, his view was broadly compatible with the rejection of materialism as an adequate basis for science or politics by such influential thinkers as Hermann von Helmholtz and F. A. Lange.<sup>114</sup> He helped to weaken the influence of German idealism as concerned science in supporting a thoroughly empirical approach.

At the time a number of thinkers, for instance J. S. Mill, favored a psychological approach to knowledge. Lotze made important contributions to the emerging project of neo-Kantian epistemology in insisting on a conception of validity which isolated questions of psychological origin, and which anticipated the Southwest German neo-Kantian school. Lotze, who anticipates the attack on psychologism by Frege, Husserl, and others, included much that would normally be considered as belonging to epistemology with his various writings on logic.<sup>115</sup> Yet he did not call it “theory of knowledge” since in

the 1850s and 1860s this term was used for psycho-physiological investigation by such incipient neo-Kantians as Helmholtz and Lange. Like Kant, Lotze believes that when “theory of knowledge” points to psychological investigation, then validity is subordinated to the psychological development of thought. Psychology is never the foundation of philosophy but only a mere empirical discipline. Lotze’s position culminates in the idea of a personal deity, which, he believes, has voluntarily chosen certain laws and ways in which divine ends are realized. In the final analysis nothing but the spirit of God and God’s world is real, and the ordinary world is real only as the appearance of God who underlies and makes it possible. “Religious belief in understanding the world as a divine creation has always cherished and expressed the same conviction in another way . . . [that] the most essential part of . . . [nature] consists in what God meant or willed that it should be.”<sup>116</sup>

Lotze and F. A. Lange are transitional figures leading to neo-Kantianism, which only emerged later. Lange, who did so much to bring into being the neo-Kantianism movement, which, like Kant, focuses on theory of knowledge, was paradoxically a social activist concerned to diminish attention to epistemological concerns. He is best known for his criticism of materialism. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the turn away from idealism and toward science as a way to explain the world by concentrating on facts, principles, and scientific laws led thinkers like Ludwig Büchner and Jacob Moleschott to emphasize materialism. In a work on the cycle of life, Moleschott argued in 1852 for the reduction of force to matter and the conservation of matter.<sup>117</sup> In his study of force and matter which went through sixteen editions, Büchner claimed that science is the basis of all philosophy and that the real is, as Peirce later suggested, what natural science says it is. In suggesting there is no place for metaphysics, he struck a blow against its Kantian rehabili-

tation.<sup>118</sup> In his *History of Materialism* (*Geschichte des Materialismus*, 1865), Lange, who follows Kant in refuting materialism, acknowledged it as methodologically useful for the purposes of natural science while opposing reductionism. Like Kant, he argues that the world that is given in experience and knowledge is no more than a representation constructed by the mind, which must not be conflated with a material reality. Matter is no more than a representation of reality, and knowledge is limited to appearances.<sup>119</sup>

Lange's critique of materialism effectively called attention to the resources of idealism in the domain of natural science, but did not reverse or even weaken the reaction against Hegel. Lange intended his critique of materialism as a way of returning to Kant.<sup>120</sup> It was important in launching neo-Kantianism as a full-fledged movement, and influenced a number of figures, including Nietzsche. But it did little to dampen the widespread enthusiasm for materialism, especially in Marxism. Like the materialists of antiquity, in his book on Feuerbach (1888) Engels took the position that the real is composed of matter in motion. In 1908, following Engels, Lenin suggested that the principal feature of Kant's philosophy was the reconciliation of materialism and idealism in a compromise between the two, or the combination within one system of heterogeneous and contrary philosophical trends.<sup>121</sup>

Otto Liebmann, Kuno Fischer, and Eduard Zeller are three of the figures most important in the emergence of neo-Kantianism. Liebmann was an anti-Hegelian Kantian whereas Fischer and Zeller, who were both historians of philosophy, were broadly Hegelian. Fischer wrote several volumes on Kant, which were influential in the genesis of neo-Kantianism. Windelband, a neo-Kantian and an important historian of philosophy, thought Fischer played the most significant role in the re-

vival of Kant.<sup>122</sup> Others think that the decisive role was played by Lange.<sup>123</sup>

The transition from a very serious debate among experts to a neo-Kantian movement was accelerated by the publication in 1865 of Otto Liebmann's study of Kant and his epigones.<sup>124</sup> This book, Liebmann's first—he was only twenty-five when it appeared—is in every way the work of a young man, filled with passion, simplistic, and destined to divide its readers into adherents and enemies, much like Ayer's similar study, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), which later did so much to call attention to Vienna Circle positivism in England. Liebmann claims that though many details in Kant cannot be defended, his idealism and phenomenalism remain valid. Like nearly all Kant's readers, he rejects the thing in itself. But he insists on the role of the mind in organizing the chaos of the phenomenal world in which things are given as unorganized appearances. Each of Liebmann's chapters famously ends with the slogan: We must return to Kant! (*Also muss auf Kant zurückgegangen werden!*).

Fischer was an important historian of philosophy who studied under a series of Hegelians, including Christian Weisse, who also taught Lotze, as well as Johann Eduard Erdmann and Julius Schaller. He remained Hegelian in his concern to detect "the philosophy of history in the history of philosophy."<sup>125</sup> Through his work on Kant, Fischer generated enthusiasm for the critical philosophy. Fischer, like several other transitional figures, including Zeller and later Cassirer, was indebted to both Hegel and Kant. According to his student Windelband, who later became an eminent historian of philosophy, Fischer was simultaneously committed to the Hegelian view that human reason progressively emerges in a historical process, which does not terminate in Hegel, and to the Kantian view that reason is never absolute.<sup>126</sup>



Zeller, who was the most important German historian of ancient Greek philosophy during this period, strongly influenced the neo-Kantian turn to epistemology. In his inaugural lecture, delivered on becoming professor in Heidelberg, "On the Significance and Task of Theory of Knowledge" ("Über die Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Erkenntnistheorie," 1862), he took his distance from Hegel and described his program for renewing theory of knowledge. This lecture contributed to bringing about the acceptance of Kantian epistemology in academic circles. Like others of the time, especially Lotze, Zeller believed that Hegel dogmatically conflated logic and ontology, which, as Kant showed, should be kept apart.<sup>127</sup> This amounted to going back to a logic of the conditions of knowledge which functioned as the necessary propaedeutic to material knowledge.<sup>128</sup> We must return behind the systems developed after Kant to recapture their starting point in the theory of knowledge worked out in the critical philosophy. In order to go forward, we must go back to Kant, correcting his mistakes in the spirit of his position. "The beginning of the series of developments of contemporary philosophy is Kant, and the scientific achievement through which Kant opened a new road is his theory of knowledge. Every effort to improve the basis of our philosophy must return to Kant's investigations in order to study the questions Kant raised in the spirit of his critique, in order, in taking advantage of the scientific experience of our century, to avoid the mistakes made by Kant."<sup>129</sup>

Zeller pointed to the need to renew philosophy by renewing Kant's theory of knowledge, understood not as incompatible but rather as compatible with recent science. This led to a large neo-Kantian movement with branches in Germany, France, and Italy. The two main branches were the Marburg school and the Southwest school, also called the Baden or Heidelberg school.<sup>130</sup> Speaking very generally, the Marburg thinkers were mainly con-

cerned to apply Kantian ideas to the natural sciences, and the Heidelberg thinkers focused on addressing the historical and cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) through Kantian insights.

The two main neo-Kantian schools derive from different readings of Kant. Cohen, the principal founder of the Marburg school, held that Kant's achievement was to uncover a priori elements which give rise to the different domains of scientific experience; Windelband, who began the Southwest school, believed Kant's contribution lay in the attempt to create a critical science of norms (axiology) centering on the problem of validity.<sup>131</sup> In both cases, an initial phase of appropriating Kant was followed by the development of a system. For Cohen this was a system of philosophy, and for Windelband this was a systematic treatment of the history of philosophy.

Besides Cohen and Paul Natorp, another cofounder, the Marburg school also included Karl Vorländer, Arthur Liebert, Eduard Bernstein, for a time Nicolai Hartmann, and above all Ernst Cassirer. The Marburg school thinkers return to and develop a Kantian approach to epistemology leading beyond Kant with analogies to Kantian morality. In theoretical philosophy, Kant holds that experience and knowledge of objects depend finally on an input, or given, and in that minimal but crucial sense they are dependent on context. Yet in morality he contends that the autonomous individual is completely independent of context. In taking a wholly a priori approach to cognition by rejecting the thing in itself as well as any immediate given in experience, the Marburg thinkers recast Kantian theoretical philosophy in the mold of Kantian morality. The real is no more than what is posited in thought. And efforts to determine what Kant called "the transcendental object = X" are limited solely by the laws of thought. In the suggestion that to know is not to uncover, discover, or reveal the mind-

independent world as it is but only to construct reality for oneself in a way unconstrained by the real, the Marburg school surpasses Kant, or at least the letter of the critical philosophy, perhaps even its spirit, in the direction of Berkeley.

A series of variations on this form of Kantian epistemology is worked out by the main members of the Marburg school. Cohen, who began as an interpreter of Kant, later developed his own system before finally turning to Jewish studies. He rejected the naturalism he associated with Helmholtz, Lange, and Liebmann. Instead of beginning from an analysis of consciousness, he studies the application of concepts to sensations in order to produce world pictures as distinguished from the mind-independent external world. In his early book on *Kant's Theory of Experience* (*Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, 1871), he began to establish a Kantian doctrine of the a priori in stressing Kant's importance for epistemology. Cohen's aim here lay in developing a new theory of experience linked to the exact sciences and based on the a priori identification of the conditions of knowledge. He rejected the thing in itself as well as the dualisms between appearance and perception, and perception and thought, insisting that thought is always present in every sensation and perception. And he understood knowledge as an endless process of the rational penetration of the world as given in experience.

Cohen's central insight, a form of Kantian constructivism, is the thesis that what we take to be objects are in fact produced by subjectivity not only in science, but also in morality and art. We can accept nothing as given and everything is problematic. Cohen later used this thesis in working out his own system. In the first volume of his system, *Logic of Pure Knowledge* (1902, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*), he applies a version of Kantian constructivism to physics and all forms of knowledge: "The mathematical generation of motion [by integration of the derivative] and thereby nature itself is the triumph of pure

thinking.”<sup>132</sup> He generalizes this constructivist approach in further writing: “Thinking itself produces what is held to be.”<sup>133</sup>

The Marburg version of Kant’s constructivist approach to epistemology is further developed by Natorp and Cassirer. In an appreciation of Natorp, Cassirer said that once he became aware of efforts by Cohen and Lange to interpret Kant, he “placed his whole thinking and his entire, powerful capacity for work in the service of this *single* task,” that is, the development of “philosophy as science.”<sup>134</sup> Natorp, who completed his *Habilitation* under Cohen’s direction, wrote widely on ethics, politics, and social pedagogy. He was especially important as a historian of ancient philosophy, for instance, ancient skepticism, which he interprets as anticipating facets of the approach to knowledge in Kant and in the Marburg school.<sup>135</sup> This approach is continued, widened, and deepened by Cassirer.

Cassirer, who studied with both Cohen and Natorp, is certainly the most powerful thinker associated with the Marburg school. He is a philosophical giant, perhaps the last thinker who like Hegel spanned virtually all that was known in his time. The extraordinary breadth of Cassirer’s conceptual reach renders it difficult to describe his position briefly. Simplifying, one can say Cassirer played a mediating role between mathematics and the natural sciences, on the one hand; and the human sciences construed very broadly, including, say, not only anthropology and linguistics, but even literature, on the other. He made contributions to a large number of fields as well as working out an original position. His many books include specific studies of individual thinkers, such as Leibniz;<sup>136</sup> a multivolume account of the history of the problem of knowledge;<sup>137</sup> technical, systematic studies of the foundations of epistemology<sup>138</sup> and relativity theory;<sup>139</sup> as well as detailed investigations of Renaissance thought.<sup>140</sup> His original position is worked out in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (*Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 1923).<sup>141</sup>

Cassirer's thought encompasses historical as well as systematic studies as equally important aspects of a single unitary vision. In his historical studies of epistemology, he deepened and developed the typical Marburg thesis that the history of modern philosophy turns on working out an epistemology based on modern science. Through his thorough grounding in mathematics and the natural sciences, Cassirer was able to carry this thesis well beyond the history of philosophy. Unlike, say, Reichenbach, who saw in Einstein's appeal to non-Euclidean geometry a refutation of Kant,<sup>142</sup> in his study of relativity theory Cassirer argued for the compatibility between Einstein and the Marburg interpretation of Kant. Cassirer interprets the cognitive relation between finite human beings and the world not as representational, but rather as symbolic.<sup>143</sup> In his theory of symbolic forms, Cassirer studies human culture through a conception of human beings as "symbolic animals." The result is to generalize the symbol-making function of the human mind as bringing together both scientific and nonscientific forms of thought, or symbolic forms, within a unitary philosophic vision.

A simple, nontechnical idea of what Cassirer means by "symbol" can be gleaned from his semipopular essay on *Language and Myth*.<sup>144</sup> Cassirer rejects naïve realism, or the idea that something is immediately given as it is, in favor of Kant's Copernican revolution.<sup>145</sup> This claim puts him resolutely in Kant's constructivist camp. According to Cassirer, "the special symbolic forms are not imitations, but *organs* of reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such is made visible to us."<sup>146</sup> Symbols allow us to grasp the contents of conscious experience in various ways against a linguistic background. "... the analysis of reality in terms of things and processes, permanent and transitory aspects, objects and actions [does] not precede language as a substratum of given fact . . . language itself is what initiates such

articulations, and develops them in its own sphere.<sup>147</sup> Yet like Kant's view of categories, Cassirer further holds that symbols, or as he also says "language, myth, art, and science . . . function organically together in the constitution of spiritual reality," but that "each of these organs has an individual assignment."<sup>148</sup>

I will close this section with a brief reference to the Southwest neo-Kantian school. Windelband, who founded this school, studied with Lotze and taught in Heidelberg. He is especially important as a historian of philosophy. He approached philosophy through Kant as the critical science of general, or universal, values. His inaugural lecture as a professor in Heidelberg (1892)<sup>149</sup> focused on the very Kantian theme of logic as the methodology of science. Like Dilthey, he distinguished between the historical and the natural sciences. At least formally these sciences can be distinguished according to their cognitive goals. The natural sciences seek general laws which, formulated in the language of formal logic, consist in general, apodictic, nomothetical judgments, whereas the historical sciences are concerned with historical facts with the aim of formulating singular, idiographic, assertoric propositions. Windelband, who notes that logic has so far mainly studied the nomothetic sciences, suggests the importance of studying the logic of the historical sciences. In the same way as an artist needs to work out the idea in his imagination, so the task of the historian is to make the past live. Turning to the difference between Christianity and the Hellenic world, Windelband claims that the former differs from the latter in detecting eternal values where the latter saw only isolated events. Hence, both the historical and the natural sciences lead to general knowledge beyond particular events.

Rickert, who studied with Windelband, and who was professor of philosophy in Freiburg and Heidelberg, did not consider himself to be a neo-Kantian. He is mainly known for his

work on the logical foundations of the sciences, epistemology, and theory of values. According to Rickert, there are transcendent, transtemporal values, which are valid in independence of any experience. Though Rickert is now nearly forgotten, he was important enough at the time for Heidegger to dedicate his *Habilitation* to him.<sup>150</sup> Rickert was concerned with the conception of value, which he divided into many different types. According to Rickert, "values are not realities, neither physical nor psychical. Their essence consists in their validity, not in their factuality."<sup>151</sup> He held that the realization of truth cannot only depend on the individual. Anyone who desires to understand objective reality must also rely on belief, hence the transcendent.<sup>152</sup>

#### DISPARATE STRANDS IN BRITISH IDEALISM

I have devoted substantial attention to German idealism since, as I will suggest below, it remains extremely significant for any idealist approach to the problem of knowledge. I will devote much less, indeed only scant, attention to British idealism. The individual British idealist figures are often still very interesting. Yet British idealism, which is not well defined as a philosophical tendency, has little now to teach us as concerns knowledge.

The difference in attitude between analytic philosophy and Marxism in regard to idealism is significant. Marxism, which is critical of forms of idealism less than of idealism in general, has an ambiguous stance toward Hegelian idealism. Marxists like Lukács and Kojève have written important studies about such idealist thinkers as Hegel.<sup>153</sup> This is not so far the case for analytic philosophy. Though there are analytic writers interested in selected idealist figures, especially Kant, there is not so far any analytic equivalent to Marxist studies of Hegel. But at least since Moore, Anglo-American analytic philosophy has always

rejected idealism in all its forms. It is still too early to tell if the now emerging analytic interest in Hegel, but not in idealism, on the part of W. Sellars, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and others will reverse this trend.<sup>154</sup>

In refuting British idealism, analytic philosophy believed itself to be refuting idealism in general. Philosophical tendencies vary widely in their degree of uniformity. The opponents of British idealism—especially early analytic thinkers, above all Moore, to a lesser degree Russell and then Wittgenstein, but also the pragmatist William James—depict it as forming a close-knit but entirely erroneous philosophical approach, in all ways typical of idealism in general. Yet there is no standard idealist model, and British idealism, which was unorthodox by any standard, does not follow it.

The term “British idealism” is usually used to refer to forms of idealism such as Cambridge Platonism, Berkeley—the most important “British” (Irish) idealist—and British Hegelianism. British idealism, which also included Kantians, anti-Hegelians, Schelling enthusiasts, personalists, and others, was an exceedingly loose congeries of disparate and mutually opposing thinkers interested in later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German philosophy, all thrown together under a single, vague heading, which apparently lacks conceptual unity, such as a central theme. It is not easy to respond to the very simple questions: What do British idealists have in common? And: what is idealist about British idealism? Everything is in doubt about British idealism, including what the term refers to, when it began, when it ended, whom it included, and what, if anything, other than the English language and British nationality, British idealists had in common.

British idealists, in fact, had only two features in common. The first, which resulted from their thorough adaptation of insights often borrowed from abroad, was the resolutely British



character of their thought. There is truth in the view that the way that idealism comes into British philosophy is wholly continuous with the English-language philosophical tradition.<sup>155</sup> The other—which seems to be their main and arguably their sole shared doctrinal commitment—was their thorough opposition to English empiricism.

What is called British idealism took shape in a complex interaction between philosophers concerned simultaneously with German idealism, especially Kant and Hegel, but also Schelling, as well as with working out their own positions. British idealism is often understood more narrowly as British Hegelianism. The turn to Hegelianism in England in the second half of the nineteenth century as Hegel's fortunes were declining in Germany is closely linked in some, but not all, of its main representatives, to an association between philosophy and religion, as well as to the revival of metaphysics in reaction against traditional English empiricism. British idealism developed on the heels of J. H. Stirling's well-known, but infrequently read book, *The Secret of Hegel* (1865).<sup>156</sup> Stirling was an intellectual champion of Christianity, and an opponent of T. H. Huxley, a co-discoverer of evolution. Stirling's work features a version of the familiar right-wing, or religious, interpretation of Hegel. He curiously regards the central aim of both Kant and Hegel as to restore faith of all kinds: in God, in the immortality of the soul, in freedom of the will, and in Christianity as the revealed religion.

The enormous diversity among the British idealists includes their often very different relations to Hegel. Observers often conflate British idealism and British Hegelianism.<sup>157</sup> But none of the British idealists were orthodox Hegelians and some of them were not even Hegelian at all. The British idealists were "idealists" first and Hegelian, if they were Hegelian in any recognizable sense, only afterward. In general, the British ideal-

ists were dependent on Kant as well as Hegel and many other sources. Hegel's influence was strongly felt at least through Bradley, who is often regarded as the most significant of the British idealists, and Bosanquet, before the later transformation of British idealism into personalist idealism. According to Jean Pucelle, Bosanquet was incontestably the most Hegelian of British philosophers.<sup>158</sup> Caird, who wrote an important book on Kant,<sup>159</sup> was closer to Hegel than was Green. Bradley denies that Green was Hegelian. Green, in turn, thought that Caird was too Hegelian, and, returning to Kant took the world as a universal mind.

The British idealists took very different views of Hegel. Coleridge, who was a disciple of Kant and then of Schelling, was concerned with the fidelity of the post-Kantians to Kant.<sup>160</sup> Green, a critic of Hume, was always closer to Kant than to Hegel.<sup>161</sup> A. Seth (Pringle-Pattison), J. Seth, and H. Sturt are among the many British idealists who broke with Hegel. Bradley, who is often thought of as the most Hegelian of the British idealists, specifically says he did not regard himself as a Hegelian, since he never mastered Hegel's position and could not accept its central idea. Bradley denies that there is a Hegelian school.<sup>162</sup> But the belief that it existed and lived on in British idealism led to a situation in which British idealist positions, which often bore little if any resemblance to Hegel's, served as a lightning rod for criticism of Hegelianism of all kinds.

It is very difficult, since the views are so different, to generalize about British idealism. According to Pucelle, one of the best observers, the British idealists are united by three themes: the (free) self, synthesis of the subject and the object, and a view of organic totality.<sup>163</sup> But Pucelle undercuts his own claim by describing Coleridge's position in terms of the twin themes of the self and God.<sup>164</sup> The religious inspiration, which runs through British idealism from Stirling through Green, Bradley,

and others, is temporarily interrupted in McTaggart, who is opposed to any variety of Christianity, and perhaps in Caird as well.

Another approach is to relate their views through their shared opposition to traditional English empiricism. This opposition was important in attracting the enmity of analytic philosophy as it emerged in England through a qualified defense of empiricism. Yet analytic philosophy later turned against empiricism, including British empiricism. It is then ironic that the later analytic attack on empiricism in effect brought analytic philosophy into agreement with British idealism, which it earlier so strongly refuted.

Traditional English empiricism eliminates religion from experience in reducing objects to impressions or sensations through which they can then be reconstructed through the association of ideas. The idealist metaphysics, as it developed in British idealism, tended to depict everything as a manifestation of spirit.<sup>165</sup> The absolute, which looms very large in Bradley and Bosanquet, plays no role at all for McTaggart. Even the commitment to religion separates them since, although Bradley understood God as the absolute, McTaggart was an atheist. In fact, a number of those often classed as British Hegelians, for instance Green, who was very Kantian, were less interested in fidelity to Hegel, who influenced him more earlier than later, than in using his theories as a starting point to develop their own views.

The “idealism” of British idealism, which has no coherent use in respect to British idealism, exists mainly in the eye of the beholder, particularly in that of its analytic opponents. The test for British idealism would be an identifiable form of idealism shared by all, or at least a large number, of those classed as British idealists. There is no single identifiable British form of idealism. Other than their opposition to classical English

empiricism, there is not even a single positive epistemological doctrine shared by British idealists. Whatever doctrines they do share are not clearly idealist, and perhaps not idealist at all. The types of idealism canvassed so far share identifiable (idealist) approaches to the problem of knowledge, something that is simply lacking in British idealism. And even the shared opposition of the British idealists to classical British empiricism does not enable us to classify them as idealists. Many analytic thinkers, who reject idealism, including the later Wittgenstein, Sellars, Quine, Putnam, Rorty, Brandom, and McDowell, also oppose classical British empiricism. Yet although Wittgenstein is sometimes characterized as a linguistic idealist,<sup>166</sup> no one describes analytic philosophy in general as idealist. Further, the alleged idealist denial of the existence of the external world is not an idealist doctrine and no idealists, including none of the British idealists, not even Berkeley, against whom it is often alleged, defend this claim.

### SOME FORMS OF RECENT IDEALISM

British idealism, the first such movement for which the term “idealism” apparently has no clearly idealist meaning, is the most recent but also chronologically the last significant “idealist” movement. In its wake, there are a number of isolated idealist figures, such as Josiah Royce, R. G. Collingwood, Benedetto Croce, Brand Blanshard, and Nicholas Rescher. With the exception of Croce, who at least in Italy is widely considered the single most important Italian philosopher since Vico, none of the others has been successful in attracting a following.

Royce, who is now mostly forgotten, was important as an early American student of German idealism and as a religious thinker with close ties to the first generation of American pragmatists. He is considered to be the best American representa-

tive of absolute idealism, a position routinely, but perhaps erroneously attributed to Hegel. His own position, which he calls absolute voluntarism or absolute pragmatism, combines rationalism with an appeal to experience and practice, as well as a voluntaristic element distinguishing it from Hegel and British idealism. Royce made contributions to a variety of fields, including German idealism, ethics, logic, and religion. His detailed study of German idealism, written a century ago, is still eminently worth reading.<sup>167</sup> As a colleague of James at Harvard, he was aware of the connections between German idealism and pragmatism as the latter doctrine was taking shape. According to Royce, pragmatism is only a contemporary name for what was earlier called German idealism.<sup>168</sup>

Croce, who is still not well known outside Italy, is regarded in that country as a true philosophical giant. In a long career, he made major contributions to a large number of disciplines including history—he was also a working historian—aesthetics, and various philosophical themes, particularly historicism. Croce was both a Hegel translator as well as significant Hegel commentator. His early book on the problem of what is living and what is dead in Hegel raises a crucial issue that remains important today.<sup>169</sup> His study of Marx provided a sympathetic philosophical approach to Marx's theories, which he regarded as identical with historical materialism.<sup>170</sup> He also contributed a very careful study of the writings of Giambattista Vico, who is still considered to be the single most important Italian thinker.<sup>171</sup>

Vico's influence on Croce's view of knowledge is already visible in an early article on "History from the General Perspective of art" ("La storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell'arte," 1893).<sup>172</sup> In following Vico's view of the link between poetry and history, Croce argues here, as he will later argue in more detail, that the real is the product of spirit. In developing

a view of art as knowledge of the individual and of history as the narration of facts, Croce stakes out the beginnings of his own position on a Vichian basis, a basis to which he returns in his later study of his great predecessor.

Croce, who was drawn to Hegel for different reasons, is especially interested in Hegel's emphasis on history. One of Croce's most important contributions lies in his conception of historicism. Historicism, which is a modern doctrine, receives very little attention in English-speaking lands. But it looms very large in Italian thought, starting as early as Vico. Croce's version of historicism consists in a theory of history as autonomous with respect to philosophy and science. In an important passage, he outlines a view of philosophy as the methodology of history.<sup>173</sup> In his mature position, Croce gives up a traditional metaphysical view of philosophy in favor of a conception of philosophy as philosophy of history.<sup>174</sup> He argues that philosophy and historiography are united, and can be separated for expository purposes only. Philosophy is not an abstract, disinterested discipline, but rather concerned with particular problems arising from our lived lives as well as the themes or issues interesting one or another group at a particular time.<sup>175</sup> Philosophy, which cannot be definitive,<sup>176</sup> is primarily concerned with explaining the categories of historical interpretation.<sup>177</sup> The task of philosophy, which does not lie in applying an abstract scheme to experience, consists in formulating concepts to think the reality in which we live.<sup>178</sup> As the methodological aspect of historiography, philosophy elucidates the constitutive characteristics of historical judgments in explaining, justifying and forging the central concepts of historical interpretation.<sup>179</sup>

Croce's historicism is entirely consistent with the strongly historicist temper of Italian thought. It is consistent as well with his extensive experience not only as a philosopher but also as a working historian. Croce, like Hegel, rejects the Cartesian

equivalence between certainty and truth. For Croce, history is neither a science, nor a metaphysical philosophy. He criticizes others through his central insight that knowledge can be neither a priori, nor the result of “forcing” experience to correspond to our preconceived notions. What we know is the result of what we experience on the basis of conceptual resources, which depend on the historical moment in which we live, and which never achieve finality. For Cartesian finality, Croce substitutes the fragility of history; and, in place of certainty, he opts for the considered opinions of mere finite mortal beings. Like Descartes, Kant depicts knowledge as a problem of consciousness of an object. In Kant’s wake, Hegel calls attention to the role of self-consciousness and to the way that claims to know depend on the finite human knower. For Croce, the problem of knowledge lies in finding the appropriate way to narrate the contents of experience. Like Vico, Hegel, Marx, and many constructivists, Croce calls attention to the difficult equilibrium of the knowing process in the interaction between what is given in experience and the role of human beings in constructing a framework to know it in at least a fleeting manner.

In English, Croce is primarily known through R. G. Collingwood, his most important English-language student. Collingwood, the last well-known British idealist, made important contributions to the archeology and history of Roman Britain, as well as to philosophy. Collingwood has a complex relation to Croce, whom he translated and criticized, but by whom he was influenced and also partly followed. Like Croce, Collingwood can be described as a philosopher of culture in a wide sense. As an anomaly in England during the heyday of analytic philosophy, Collingwood insists on history rather than on physics as the basic approach to knowledge. In a late work, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (1940), he analyzes the presuppositions of various kinds of inquiry. The task of metaphysics is to identify the absolute

presuppositions of a particular period, presuppositions that are neither true nor false but which structure the discussion. Thus Aristotle identified the presuppositions of Greek science. In *The Idea of Nature*, where his historicism becomes more important, Collingwood argues that, since the idea of nature as the object of science is a historical variable, natural science is intrinsically historical.<sup>180</sup> In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood contends that what we call history is the reenactment of past events in the mind of the historian.<sup>181</sup>

The two best-known American idealist thinkers in the twentieth century are Brand Blanshard and Nicholas Rescher. Blanshard, who allies idealism and rationalism, but is fully cognizant of contemporary alternatives, is sometimes described as belonging to British absolute idealism. His work can be characterized as a lifelong defense of reason along idealist lines interspersed with other, sometimes incompatible influences. In *The Nature of Thought*,<sup>182</sup> written under the influence of J. J. Joachim, he describes the British idealist view of logic in a psychological and logical account of human thinking. Blanshard aims to work out a theory of perception and of ideas, which will satisfy both philosophers and psychologists. In rejecting empiricism, he contends that only a theory along lines developed by Bradley, Bosanquet, and Royce can be acceptable. Blanshard defends a version of the idealist coherence theory of truth. He further argues for internal relations, concrete necessity, and concrete universality. In *Reason and Analysis*,<sup>183</sup> he attacks analytic philosophy in all its many forms.

Rescher, who is sensitive to the many overlapping strands between German idealism and pragmatism, defends a systematic position he calls pragmatic idealism. He is presently the most important figure to invoke idealism as a designation of his position. He rejects causal idealism in favor of conceptual idealism, according to which access to the real is always mind-



dependent. His system, which combines influences drawn from a wide variety of sources, is idealist in insisting that the mind necessarily and always contributes to what we know, fallibilistic in contending we can never provide more than an approximation of reality, and pragmatic in contending that knowledge claims in part depend on their utility for human ends. In a representative early work, he contends that any conception of the real is bound to be mind-constructed.<sup>184</sup> More recently, he has described his systematic position as a whole in a trilogy emphasizing both idealist and pragmatic aspects.<sup>185</sup>

### 3

## Some Main Criticisms of Idealism

The reaction to philosophical idealism has been highly diverse. Idealism, or views taken as idealist, has been celebrated, ignored, superficially or minutely examined, as well as mildly or strongly criticized. I turn now to selective consideration of some main criticisms of idealist theories. As in the description of "idealism," it will not be possible to canvass all, or even all the main, criticisms which have been raised, even in outline. At most, one can hope to identify criticisms which currently appear to be significant.

There are two reasons for rehearsing criticisms raised against idealism in general, including those raised against various idealist theories. One, which is simply informative, involves the need to bring together the main criticisms of idealism in a single place. Just as there seem to be about as many "idealisms" as there are idealists, so there are at least as many criticisms of them. Objections urged against idealists and idealism are very diverse, even sometimes apparently unrelated. Thus at various times idealists, or those thought to be idealists, have been criticized for espousing dualism, for denying the existence of the external world, for contradicting common sense, for holding views which lead to skepticism, for refusing materialism, for rejecting realism, for presenting a distorted view of history, and so on. The other reason for rehearsing important objections to idealism is to set the stage for a selective defense in the next chapter, if not of idealism in general, at least of one form related to the critical philosophy as particularly important for the epistemological debate at the present time.

Since it is not clear what “idealism” means, it is also not clear if criticisms raised against specific forms of idealism count only against them or against all idealist theories. In Kant’s wake, and roughly until Hegel’s death, idealism was widely popular but perhaps not well understood. After the rise of Marxism, it was widely criticized, and after the emergence of analytic philosophy, it was vanquished. Over the last century, though individual idealists were studied—in some cases, such as Kant and Hegel, they were studied very carefully in an immense literature—there has been little direct debate about “idealism.” There is a regrettable tendency to treat “idealism” as if one knew what it meant before turning to detailed discussion of one or another idealist position. At least since Kant, who objected to the views of Descartes, Leibniz, and Berkeley, criticism addressed to particular idealists has often been conflated with criticism of idealism in general. Distinctions between idealism and nonidealism are very fluid, difficult to pin down, hence difficult to apply or to evaluate. Marxists routinely insist on an exclusive alternative between materialism, a doctrinal commitment attributed in various forms to Marx,<sup>1</sup> and idealism, which Marx is routinely held to reject in any form. Yet if I am right that Marx is an epistemological constructivist, hence that his position in that regard is very close to, even indistinguishable from, German idealism, then the Marxist critique of idealism as only “feigning” to construct the mind-independent external world could also be brought against Marx.

If Plato is an idealist, then criticism of idealism is almost as old as the Western philosophical tradition. Such criticism is often uninformed, displaying little or no direct knowledge of the texts; furthermore, it is frequently “external,” that is, dependent on the supposed truth of rival views, as opposed to identifying “internal” problems situated in, say, Plato’s position. This complaint, which was already raised by Platonists against Aris-

tole, has been echoed many times in the later debate. Many of the standard criticisms brought against different forms of idealism subtly or not so subtly miss the mark while revealing insufficient acquaintance with what is being criticized. Berkeley, for instance, who is widely and frequently held to defy common sense in rejecting the existence of the external world, in fact contends that philosophical theories contradict common sense, which, he believes, accepts precisely what he is often thought to deny.

#### PLATO AND ARISTOTLE ON THE THEORY OF IDEAS

The theory of ideas is the main theme in Platonism. Plato and Aristotle are both strongly critical of Platonic idealism. Plato is not only the first great idealist, the inventor of Platonic idealism, that is, the notorious theory of ideas, but also its first great critic. His attitude towards the theory of ideas is ambivalent. He is notoriously critical of various versions of the theory of ideas in the *Parmenides*. In the first part of the dialogue, Plato has Parmenides raise a long series of devastating criticisms of the theory, understood as requiring the participation (*methexis*) of sensible things in forms. The objections turn on a clearly dualistic reading of the theory of ideas, featuring an equally clear separation (*chorismos*) between ideas and things. One can infer that Plato was opposed, or later became opposed, to this particular version of the theory. In the second part of the dialogue (130A–135D), Plato considers a series of difficulties, including the extent of separate ideas (130A–D), the vexed problem of participation (131A–C), the paradox of divisibility (131A–C), ideas as thoughts (132B–C), ideas as paradigms (second regress) (132D–133A), and separation and “unknowability” (133A–134C). The overall conclusion is that ideas are necessary for thought and discourse (134C–135D). Although

a series of aporias arises if ideas exist separately and in themselves (133A), to deny the existence of ideas, understood as an idea for everything which exists, simply destroys the power of dialectic (135B–C). Since Socrates, who does not reply to the criticism, also contends there is no alternative to this theory, one can infer that Plato is calling attention to a theory he believes he simply cannot do without, but also cannot adequately defend, at least not in any known version. In the third part of the dialogue, which is much longer, Parmenides trains Socrates in dialectic (135D–166C).

The relation of Aristotle to Plato has evoked an enormous, very specialized literature.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, who is famously more devoted to truth than to Plato, frequently criticizes the latter. In the *Politics*,<sup>3</sup> he objects to Platonic proposals concerning the community of women and children by arguing that Plato's view is wrong in principle and cannot be realized on his proposed basis. He is also critical of the theory of ideas. A number of Aristotle's criticisms of this theory were already known to and rejected by Plato, including difficulties about participation, infinite regress, and dualism. When he does not invent new criticisms, Aristotle's role seems to consist in extending criticisms already raised against the theory of ideas.

To say that Plato was aware of certain objections, for instance the third man argument, a term invented by Aristotle to refer to the ontological regress argument advanced by Plato in the *Parmenides*, is not the same as saying he has an adequate response for it. Some observers think Plato never understood the problem posed by an infinite regress.<sup>4</sup> Others believe this claim misrepresents Plato, who understood and was successful, or at least partly successful, in handling the problem.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Plato also rejects dualism as unsatisfactory. But it is not clear that Plato can formulate a version of the theory of ideas which circumvents dualism, hence, which answers Aristotle. Yet since Plato's

own view of the theory of ideas is unclear, perhaps Aristotle is not responding to precisely the view Plato defends. Yet in that case, it is plausible to believe that he criticizes the view that Plato's position leads to, since there is no clear alternative in Platonism to dualism. In the dialogues, Plato is clearly aware of the problematic nature of the concept of participation as well as a host of other problems, some of which are quickly raised by Aristotle.

Throughout the *Metaphysics*, especially in the first book<sup>6</sup> as well as in book 13,<sup>7</sup> in reviewing prior theories of knowledge Aristotle places Plato in the context of an ongoing effort to arrive at definitions for sensible things. According to Aristotle, Plato, who accepted the Heraclitean doctrine that a common definition for mutable sensible things is impossible, holds that things participate in and are defined by ideas. Aristotle straightforwardly suggests that Plato's sole innovation lies in a mere verbal change in substituting "participation" for the Pythagorean doctrine that things "imitate" numbers.<sup>8</sup> And both, he asserts, fail to study what it means to "participate" or to "imitate." According to Aristotle, Plato employs explanation with respect to the "what" and the material basis of things. Aristotle, who rejects both the Pythagorean approach to explanation through the imitation of numbers as well as the Platonic view that things participate in ideas, explores differences between the Pythagorean and Platonic approaches—unlike the Pythagoreans, Plato introduces mathematical entities between sensible things and ideas<sup>9</sup>—arriving at the conclusion that "participation" is a meaningless term, simply incompatible with scientific explanation.<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle's critique of Plato's theory of ideas has remained controversial over more than two millennia. Some observers think that he is right in rejecting Plato's conception of *chorismos*; others believe Plato's theory must have been better than it is de-

picted by his most important student. Still others are convinced that Aristotle did not understand, or did not fully understand, Plato's theory<sup>11</sup> though he was at least successful in accurately reporting what he was also attacking.<sup>12</sup> In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle assembles a long list of objections against the version of the theory of ideas he ascribes to Plato. Aristotle detects a relation between the Pythagorean use of mathematical entities as principles and elements to explain nature, and the Platonic theory of ideas. The similarity lies in the effort to explain what is perceptible by what is intelligible but separate from it. In objecting to the separation between the perceptible and the intelligible, Aristotle favors a form of explanation that rejects both a Pythagorean mathematical approach and a Platonic theory of ideas as even potentially acceptable.

Aristotle's polemic turns in part on the separation between ideas and things. The nature of Plato's position is disputed. Some scholars deny that Plato holds the position Aristotle attributes to him. Thus W. D. Ross, an important Aristotle scholar, who admits the conceptual distinction between universals and particulars, doubts that Plato in fact separates universals, or ideas, from particulars, or sensible things.<sup>13</sup> Here two points seem plausible. First, it is at least interesting that Aristotle clearly credits Plato with such a theory, since it is reasonable to believe that he would have been acquainted with the published dialogues and also have been aware of differences between them and what is sometimes called the unwritten doctrines, or unpublished teachings in the Academy.<sup>14</sup> Second, though Platonists sometimes suggest Aristotle did not understand Plato, there seems no reason to draw this inference. On the contrary, he appears to be following his teacher in many of the specific objections Plato also formulates against the theory of ideas. The main difference seems to be that Plato regards the

theory of ideas as flawed, but necessary, in a word an unavoidable evil, whereas Aristotle sees a clear alternative to that theory in his own position. Rather than subtly or not so subtly missing the point because he is uninformed, or incompletely informed about, a theory he misreads in whole or in part, it appears that Aristotle in fact agrees with Plato in rejecting a theory which neither he nor Plato finds satisfactory and that he but not Plato feels able to do without.

### ON MODERN IDEALIST CRITICISM OF IDEALISM

The critical reaction to modern forms of idealism takes three main forms. First, there is criticism leveled by one member of a given tendency against others in the same tendency. Such criticism is internal to one or another idealist tendency. Second, there is criticism of one idealist tendency by a representative of another such tendency. Such "intrinsic" criticism concerns the reaction from a member of one idealist tendency against a member of another such tendency. Third, there is criticism of one or more idealists, or of idealism in general, from a vantage point located outside it. Such criticism, which is "extrinsic," is based not on idealism but rather, like Aristotle's criticism of Plato's position, on a proposed (or presupposed) alternative to it.

As an example of the first, or intra-idealist, type of criticism, consider the critical interaction among the English empiricists or among the German idealists. Locke, for example, proposes a causal view of knowledge, which rests on conceptions of matter and causality. The simplest way to describe the later empiricist reaction to Locke is to say that Berkeley rejects matter for immaterialism, and Hume rejects causality. The dialectical interaction among the German idealists is particularly complex. Suffice it to say that Kant and Schelling criticize Fichte. Hegel,



who criticizes Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, is himself criticized after his death by Schelling. And Marx, who mainly ignores Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, criticizes Hegel.

If, for purposes of argument, we assume that a philosophical tendency is inspired at least generally, if not always explicitly, by a shared doctrinal commitment, then criticism of one representative of a given tendency by another leaves untouched the supposed validity of the tendency to which both are committed. As examples of the criticism between different forms of idealism, consider the empiricist critique of rationalism and the German idealist criticism of both rationalism and empiricism.

The obvious theoretical opposition between rationalism and empiricism, which suggests a clear distinction between the two, tends in practice to “fragment” into a very unclear situation. As the term suggests, rationalists of all kinds stress the role of reason in knowledge, including intuition, in opposition to sensation and perception, the emotions, authority, or other possible sources. Empiricists since Democritus<sup>15</sup> emphasize the epistemological role of sensation or perception, which they tend to equate, in contradistinction to reason, the emotions, authority, or other possible sources. English empiricists are traditionally committed to some version of the view that knowledge is possible only on the basis of and is limited to (empirical) experience.

This typical way of characterizing rationalism and empiricism suggests clear differences between them more easily described in theory than in practice. Rationalists tend to favor a representational approach to cognition. Empiricists favor both representational and nonrepresentational approaches to cognition. Empiricists, who favor a representational approach to cognition, tend to rework the rationalist conception of ideas.

In practice, the lines between rationalism and empiricism cannot be neatly drawn. Empiricists divide among themselves

about the relation between the mind and the world. Some empiricists and all rationalists share the view that the relation of the mind to the world is never direct, but always mediated through ideas. Other empiricists hold that the mind comes into direct, immediate, or unmediated contact with our surroundings. Thus Descartes and a number of classical British empiricists, including Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, believe that we are immediately aware of ideas only, since each denies we directly know the world. But such other “empiricists” as Reid, Moore to the extent he favors immediate knowledge, and Putnam in the most recent form of his labile position converge around the view that to know is to have direct, unmediated contact with what is as it is.

In part, the difference turns on the conditions of bringing the mind in touch with the world, which for Descartes only occurs through his conception of ideas as the basis of his representational theory of perception. The representational approach to knowledge through ideas, which links rationalism and types of empiricism, disappears in direct, or nonrepresentational forms of empiricism. In eschewing the idea of anything situated between the observer and the observed, this type of empiricism basically differs from rationalism as well as from other types of empiricism.

#### KANT’S FIRST CRITIQUE OF “BAD” IDEALISM

More than anyone else, Kant, who defends a form of idealism, but who inconsistently criticizes “idealism,” or idealism in general, is responsible for the poor reputation of idealism. Kant, like Hume, rejects “bad” metaphysics, but not metaphysics as such.<sup>16</sup> He further rejects “bad” idealism, but not “idealism,” since he defends transcendental idealism. Although he often talks loosely, imprecisely and inconsistently about re-

jecting “idealism,” as in the famous “Refutation of Idealism,” his commitment to transcendental idealism entails that he cannot reject idealism in general.

“Bad” idealism is a term Kant does not use, but which captures his intent to reject its deficient forms, but not idealism as such. Kant’s critique of “bad” idealism is important for the formulation of his own position and very influential. Its influence is seen in the development of post-Kantian German idealism, in the Marxist critique of idealism in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in the analytic critique of (British) idealism at the beginning of the twentieth century. In view of the influence of Kant’s critique of “bad” idealism for his own position and later philosophy, it will be useful to examine it in some detail, if not in the detail required by a specialist account of the critical philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

Kant is a critical thinker in two senses: he claims for the first time to go beyond mere dogmatism in examining reason as the instrument of knowledge in the course of demonstrating his affirmations, and he criticizes views he rejects. Kant’s critical reaction to “bad” idealism is a turning point. In Kant, the desultory critical reaction to kinds of idealism, which mainly stagnates from the time of Aristotle’s reaction to Plato, acquires a focus and depth it never later surpasses, and, with the exception of Hegel’s own critique of Kant, never again attains. Other critical reactions to idealism, such as to the Cambridge Platonists, the critique of Leibniz, the widespread, but often uninformed, diffuse, ongoing attack on Berkeley, or scattered remarks by Wolff, who influenced Kant, fall well below the level the discussion attains in the latter’s writings.

Kant’s critique of “bad” idealism presupposes the truth of some form of representationalism while rejecting as unworkable views he attributes to other enthusiasts of the new way of ideas. In his representational moments, Kant, like other proponents

of the new way of ideas, relies on ideas, or, in his terminology, representations. In criticizing idealism, he does not reject representationalism. He only rejects “bad,” or defective versions of the new way of ideas in favor of his critical reformulation of this approach.

When combined with a commitment to realism, the conviction that idealism and realism are incompatible is a frequent factor in the rejection of idealism. Idealism and realism are not incompatible, since many, perhaps all idealists, including Kant, are committed to realism. Hence the tendency to regard idealism as such and realism as incompatible is mistaken. Yet some forms of idealism are incompatible with some forms of realism. In assessing Kant’s critical reaction to “bad” idealism, it is important to keep separate his own position, which “officially” combines a dual commitment to transcendental idealism—or “good” idealism—and empirical realism, or “good” empiricism, from positions he criticizes.

A fuller reading of Kant’s position than is possible here would need to make sense of his dual commitment to idealism and realism within the framework of a single position. We recall that in his refutation of idealism, Moore implicitly treats Kant’s own earlier refutation of idealism as inadequate, since otherwise there would be no need for another effort to carry out the same task. Since Moore, Kant’s commitment to transcendental idealism is sometimes overlooked, or at least underestimated in a way that brings it into line with the later analytic rejection of idealism in all its forms. Kant’s analytic readers, who tend toward the rejection of idealism as such, often rely on a foreshortened reading of his position. This reading favors Kant’s empirical realism while silently dropping, or at least minimizing, his transcendental idealism. Peter Strawson, a very able commentator, typically claims that Kant’s analysis of experience leads to the doctrine that experience and knowledge of objects amount to awareness

of mind-independent objects in time and space.<sup>18</sup> For Strawson, and more recently for Beiser, Kant's critical philosophy is clearly committed to a variety of metaphysical realism.

Kant often has difficulty in making up his mind about his view of important themes. His attitude towards idealism remains ambivalent throughout his career. He typically but inconsistently rejects idealism in general while proclaiming his own allegiance to transcendental idealism. Kant's critique of idealism starts well before the beginning of the critical period. As early as the *Nova Dilucidatio* (1755), he criticizes Descartes' subjective idealism for doubting the existence of the external world and he criticizes Leibniz' objective idealism for affirming only the reality of the noumenal world. He develops his critique of idealism in later works. He refutes Swedenborg's idealism in "Dreams of a Spirit Seer" ("Träume eines Geistessehers," 1766). Swedenborg allegedly holds that corporeal beings have no substance of their own and exist only by virtue of the spiritual world. In the *Inaugural Dissertation* ("De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis" ["Von der Form der Sinnen- und Verstandeswelt und ihren Gründen"], 1770), which is often thought of as the beginning of the critical period, Kant distinguishes between his own emerging position and idealism. Here he asserts against unnamed idealists that, even if phenomena do not describe the inner characteristics of things, claims for knowledge are true. He goes on to link phenomena, or the objects of our senses, with the contents of physics and empirical psychology.<sup>19</sup> The critique of "bad" idealism, or even of idealism in general, continued to occupy Kant throughout the remainder of his career. He is still concerned with this theme in the *Reflexionen* composed during the 1790s and even in the *Opus postumum*, Kant tries to define transcendental idealism while distinguishing it from other, unacceptable forms.

Kant's commitment to defending transcendental idealism is

one factor motivating his concern to reject “bad” idealism. His comment that the only new methodological addition in the B edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* concerns the refutation of psychological idealism indicates he takes this problem seriously.<sup>20</sup> In the *Critique*, Kant offers two different arguments against “bad” idealism. To begin with, he argues, following Descartes, that experience shows there are outer things and then later he argues, again in Cartesian fashion, that an awareness of my own existence shows there are things outside me. The latter argument depends on the assumption there is no difference in principle between the claim that I know myself and the further claim that I also know things outside myself. Since Kant denies intellectual intuition, in his position knowledge of self and knowledge of any other thing are on the same level. This leads to the conclusion that, if I am self-aware, there is also an external world, since I am only aware of myself in and through that world. To put the same point differently, this whole line of argument supposes Kant’s typical refusal of intellectual intuition that, if allowed, would permit direct self-awareness unmediated by an external world. Yet it is only if there is not, and cannot in principle be, any intellectual intuition, that if I am aware of myself, there must also be an external world.

Kant’s treatment of idealism in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the scope of about ten very complicated pages addresses a possible difficulty raised by the definition of the thing in itself as what can without contradiction be thought of as a cause with respect to which what is perceived can without contradiction be thought of as an effect.<sup>21</sup> We recall that for Kant a paralogism is a fallacious syllogism. In the section on the paralogisms of pure reason, Kant entertains the question of whether we can in fact rely on causality to infer the existence of external objects (dualism) with certainty or whether their exis-

tence is only doubtful (idealism). This way of putting the problem depicts idealism, or again “bad” idealism, as the important consequence of accepting Hume’s skeptical doubts about causality. Hume is at most very rarely, perhaps never, classified as an idealist. But this inference is not obviously incorrect. Two reasons suggest a classification of this type. First, Hume’s position generally belongs to the new way of ideas, hence to a representationalist form of idealism in which Kant, in his capacity as a representationalist, also invests. Secondly, Hume’s suggestion that he rejects “bad” metaphysics suggests a willingness to accept “good” metaphysics, hence, from Kant’s point of view, an analysis of the conditions of knowledge related to Kant’s own transcendental idealism, which, he claims, is precisely awakened by Hume.

In his analysis of this difficulty, Kant favors dualism, which depends on accepting the idea that causality apodictically proves the existence of external objects. “Bad” idealism would amount to denying that causality can provide such proof, in which case any inference about the existence of external objects would remain doubtful. From this angle of vision, a “bad” idealist is not someone who denies that the external world exists, but rather someone who denies that immediate perception is sufficient to draw this conclusion. A “bad” idealist hence holds that experience can never provide complete certainty.<sup>22</sup>

Kant, who here depicts his own position as dualist, “officially” favors transcendental idealism, which he defines as the doctrine that appearances are representations, not things in themselves.<sup>23</sup> It follows that for Kant “good” idealism and empiricism, or more precisely empirical realism, are not incompatible but compatible. His transcendental idealism does not doubt, but rather explicitly affirms, the existence of the mind-independent external world. It follows that his objection is not directed against idealism as such, but only against its “bad”

form or forms, namely those which deny that experience allows us to infer the certainty of external objects.

In order to counter forms of idealism that deny this inference, Kant constructs an argument to show that experience allows this conclusion. His proposed refutation invokes his own position to demonstrate that outer perceptions yield proof of something real in space. Since space and time are conditions of experience, perception, or the form of outer sense, represents something real in space. It follows that perceptual objects are empirically real. By “real” is meant no more than what is connected in “perception according to empirical laws,”<sup>24</sup> or empirically real, as distinguished from things in themselves. Indeed, Kant is careful to say that whatever subtends external things, or outer appearances, is no more than an unknown ground, or transcendental object.<sup>25</sup>

#### “BAD” IDEALISM IN THE *PROLEGOMENA*

Kant’s initial critique of “bad” idealism, which objects to supposed idealist doubts about the existence of external objects, depicts it as denying his version of the Platonic dualism between appearance and reality, in Kant’s terminology the dualism between appearance and thing in itself (or noumenon). This argument is relatively uncomplicated, even simple, by Kantian standards, very simple in comparison to the fierce complications of his revised critique of “bad” idealism in the second edition of his book.

Kant, who thought he was misunderstood by readers of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, returns to the problem of “bad” idealism, though not under that heading, in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (*Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, 1783) as well as in the second edition of the *Critique*. In



the meantime, Kant's focus has changed. In his initial critique of "bad" idealism, he was seeking to anticipate future criticism in responding to a possible difficulty in his own position. In his later efforts to come to grips with "bad" idealism, he is seeking—both in the *Prolegomena* and in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—to address the early reception of his position in the emerging secondary literature. Kant was especially concerned to counter what he regarded as an overly idealist reading of his position. This difficulty was focused in the notorious Garve-Feder review, which Kant regarded as presenting an abusive identification of his view and Berkeley's. Kant responded by modifying his position to further accentuate its realist side.

The *Prolegomena*, which was written between the two editions of Kant's *Critique*, was intended to provide an easy way into the critical philosophy for those unable to carry out the very tough sledding required by Kant's larger study. In remarks at the end of the first part of the *Prolegomena*, Kant addresses "bad" idealism in informal fashion in successive paragraphs. In Remark II, perhaps with Berkeley in mind, he describes idealism as the position that there are only thinking beings, whose perceptions do not correspond to external objects. In response, Kant affirms that there are external things, which we know through their representations, but that this is not "idealism."

There are two points of interest here. The first is the unargued claim in which Kant invokes his familiar dualism of knowable representations and unknowable but supposedly representable external objects. This is another version of the representational approach to knowledge featured in the new way of ideas. The second point is the further claim that this is not "idealism," but its contrary. Kant here draws an implicit distinction between his own favored form of idealism, which is constructivist, hence nonrepresentational, and the representa-

tionalism of the new way of ideas, which he now rejects. In qualifying the first claim, Kant asserts that all perceived properties belong merely to appearances. Despite his own reservations about Berkeley, this assertion brings him uncomfortably close to the Irish thinker, whose theories he elsewhere steadfastly opposes, and who also denies any distinction between primary and secondary properties.

In Remark II Kant is mainly concerned to reject a position he does not agree with, but not to sketch his own rival position, which he immediately does in Remark III. Here he takes back his insistence in Remark II (as earlier in the *Inaugural Dissertation*) that his position is the contrary of “idealism,” by describing his own position as “idealism.” He insists that his (transcendental) idealism, which is unrelated to doubting the existence of things, properly concerns “the sensuous representation of things.”<sup>26</sup> At this point, Kant’s problem is not to deny the existence, but rather to account for knowledge, of external things on the basis of an ontological dualism comprising a cognitive subject and an unknowable thing in itself as the basis of its knowable representation. In espousing representationalism, Kant does not break with, but rather proposes only another variant of, the new way of ideas.

#### KANT ON “BAD” IDEALISM IN DESCARTES AND BERKELEY

Kant’s remarks on idealism in the *Prolegomena* are obviously inconsistent. He both endorses a particular form of representationalism, hence remains within the orbit of the new way of ideas, and rejects representationalism, hence any approach to knowledge in terms of ideas. This tension points to Kant’s chronic inability to make up his mind, in this case to decide whether to accept or reject representationalism, a commitment

which is inconsistent with his further commitment to epistemological constructivism. This problem is never resolved in Kant's writings, since he is never able to bring these two alternatives together within a single position, and he is also never able to decide whether to reject representationalism in favor of constructivism.

Kant's full-blown refutation of "bad" idealism is on confusing display in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here, in the final version of his great treatise, he adds two passages directly related to this theme. These include the "Refutation of Idealism" inserted in the section on the "Postulates of Empirical Thought"<sup>27</sup> and a further brief passage in a footnote in the introduction to the second edition.<sup>28</sup>

In the "Postulates of Empirical Thought," Kant provides a modal analysis of experience in the form of three postulates respectively concerning possibility, actuality, and necessity. Between the accounts of the second and third postulates, he interpolates a new, shorter discussion of "bad" idealism in about four closely argued pages. Kant's new treatment of this theme, which ranks as his definitive word on the topic, has been very influential.

In the discussion of "bad" idealism in the first edition of his treatise, Kant was above all concerned to anticipate and to defuse a possible "misreading" of his position. When he returns to this theme in the second edition, he is mainly concerned to correct a supposed "misreading" of his position in the initial reception of the critical philosophy, which was based on the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant is especially concerned to counter possible conflations of his position with Berkeley's as in the Garve-Feder review.

Kant's refutation of idealism in the second edition of the *Critique* reaches back to his earlier refutation in the *Nova Dilucidatio*. In two passages appended to his exposition of the prin-

ciple of succession, Kant refutes idealism through invoking a causal theory of perception. He complains that thus far consideration of the real existence of things has served only to demonstrate their likelihood against idealists. In response, he notes it is only if there really are mind-independent external objects that appearances could have the connections we perceive.<sup>29</sup> And he further remarks that Leibniz's conception of preestablished harmony is simply impossible.<sup>30</sup>

Kant's concern to distinguish his position from its rivals lends a welcome specificity to the new passage on "bad" idealism. In the treatment of this theme in the first edition, in referring to the putative psychologist, perhaps Locke, who mistakenly takes appearances for things in themselves, Kant distinguishes between materialists, who acknowledge only matter, and spiritualists, who countenance only thinking beings.<sup>31</sup> In the "Refutation of Idealism," Kant now links this theoretical distinction to specific philosophical positions.

Kant here identifies idealism, or more precisely material idealism, as holding that "the existence of objects in space outside us"<sup>32</sup> is doubtful and indemonstrable, or again false and impossible. He attributes the former view to Descartes and the latter to Berkeley. According to Kant, who temporarily forgets about what Descartes says on the topic of clear and distinct ideas, only the "I am" is certain in Descartes' problematic idealism. Since this omission of the Cartesian view of clear and distinct ideas is so obvious, it is possible that Kant is merely giving his estimate of what he thinks Descartes has accomplished, as distinguished from the actual argument and the claims Descartes makes for his position. A similar point could be made about Kant's reading of Berkeley, to whom he attributes the dogmatic idealist position for which space is impossible so that objects in space are merely imaginary. Yet this attribution is questionable. Berkeley does not deny space, but rather argues

against Newton's identification of space with God in featuring a view of space derived empirically that is obviously inconsistent with Kant's view of it.

In response to Descartes and Berkeley, Kant proposes to prove that we have experience of external things since inner experience is "possible only on the assumption of outer experience."<sup>33</sup> If Kant reads Descartes' and Berkeley's positions incorrectly, then he is in effect refuting a straw man. Kant is less critical of Descartes, who strongly influences his position, than of Berkeley, whose position some observers believe his own at least partially resembles. Descartes' idealism is problematic in Kant's eyes because it fails to prove the existence of the external world, as Kant says, with certainty. His complaint is not that Descartes makes a false claim, but rather that he does not prove, or even assert, what Kant would like him to have asserted as well as proved. It is as if Descartes' main fault were that he did not hold the position Kant only later worked out in responding to his French predecessor.

It is clear that Descartes claims apodicticity for the cogito. Yet it is not at all clear that his claim is, as Kant suggests, empirical.<sup>34</sup> There is a distinction between methodological doubt, which Descartes invokes as part of his argument, and the result to which the argument leads. Descartes' aim can be informally described as to weave a seamless web in the form of a single deductive argument. The Cartesian theory begins in a first principle known to be true beyond doubt of all kinds, hence an argument with no presuppositions, leading from the cogito to knowledge of the mind-independent world. Descartes freely concedes his inability to prove the existence of external objects with absolute certainty ("I cannot derive some certain proof of the existence of corporeal objects").<sup>35</sup> But in relying on God, he arrives at the desired certain result ("Hence we must allow that corporeal things exist").<sup>36</sup> Yet there is no reason to believe that

Descartes, who tries but fails to prove the existence of the external world, that is, fails to prove his point without invoking God, ever doubts it exists.

Kant is relatively generous to Descartes, but more severe concerning Berkeley. Three reasons explain the unusually harsh tenor of the criticism Kant raises against the latter. First, there is the fact that, in Kant's view of the matter, Berkeley's position runs directly counter to his own. Second, and as noted above, Kant desires to prevent any conflation between his position and Berkeley's. Third, there is the unusual force of Berkeley's critique of epistemological representationalism—something Kant defends, but also criticizes—in Berkeley's attack on Locke.

Kant's objection to Berkeley is not based on internal criticism, but rather on the views of space and time he expounds in the critical philosophy. In the "Transcendental Aesthetic" toward the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in opposition to Newton and Leibniz, Kant sketches a new theory of space. Newton distantly follows the Platonic view of space in the *Timaeus* as a receptacle, whereas Leibniz regards space as relational. In response, Kant contends that space is a subjective condition of the experience of outer objects. He applies this theory to Berkeley in contending that, because the latter holds that space is impossible, things in space are no more than imaginary entities. For Kant, the theory he ascribes to Berkeley is doubly unsatisfactory: it advances an incorrect view of space; and it renders impossible any cognitive claim, even a claim about the existence of the external world.

Kant's attack on Berkeley significantly influenced the latter's reputation as well as the later fortunes of "idealism." In Kant's time, and again at the beginning of the twentieth century during the rise of analytic philosophy in England, Berkeley was widely misunderstood as denying the existence of the external world. Thus in his *Letter on the Blind* (*Lettre sur les aveugles*,

1749), Denis Diderot attributes to Berkeley the “scandalous” view, which he takes to be coextensive with “idealism,” that we are only conscious of our own existence through internal sensation.<sup>37</sup> Diderot further assimilates E. B. de Condillac’s sensationalism to Berkeley’s position in claiming that for the former as for the latter we can go no farther than our own consciousness.<sup>38</sup> Closer to home, a similar view, which possibly influenced Kant, was maintained by the great German dogmatist Christian Wolff. In his study of rational psychology, he insists that idealists only admit what exists in the mind while denying reality to everything else.<sup>39</sup>

Kant was especially concerned to combat what he understood as the conflation of his position with Berkeley’s in reviews by Garve (and Feder) and by J. A. Eberhard.<sup>40</sup> The Garve-Feder review, the first of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*—it was composed by Garve but edited, or possibly misedited, by Feder<sup>41</sup>—appeared anonymously in 1782.<sup>42</sup> This review describes Kant’s critical philosophy as a higher idealism and claims that, like Berkeley, Kant presupposes that sensations modify the subject. The review provoked various reactions at the time. J. S. Beck, who studied with Kant, and purported to defend the authentic Kantian position against its critics, locates the crucial difference between Berkeley and Kant in the former’s denial of the reality of the surrounding world, which the latter affirms.<sup>43</sup> Beck’s view is arguably close to Kant’s own. Kant was clearly annoyed by the Garve-Feder review. Fichte, who consistently claimed to be the only authentic Kantian, was worried enough about the possible conflation between Kant and Berkeley to point out as a misinterpretation the charge that the critical philosophy, like Berkeleyan idealism, regards everything as an illusion.<sup>44</sup>

Garve’s implicit denial of any real distinction between Kant’s and Berkeley’s versions of idealism is one reason for the especially disparaging comments Kant makes not only here but in

the *Prolegomena* about the Irish philosopher. In the latter work, in the space of several lines he suggests that Berkeley's view is mystical, visionary, and a phantasm, very strong words from a critical philosopher committed to pure reason.<sup>45</sup> In a later formulation of his idealism in the *Prolegomena* and in the "Refutation of Idealism" added in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant sought to meet Garve's objection through differentiating between the existence of things in themselves and the reality of experience.

Though in the critical philosophy Kant claims to be responding to Hume, Eberhard depicts Kant as a dogmatic thinker purveying a subjective idealism in the Berkeleyan style. Eberhard, who was a follower of Wolff, claims that the main theme in Kant's critical philosophy is already found in Leibniz, who provides a stronger version of this same general project. Eberhard raised a veritable farrago of criticisms against Kant in the *Philosophisches Magazin*, which he edited, depicting Kant as advancing a mere subjective idealism, similar to Berkeley's.<sup>46</sup> Contemporaries, such as the skeptic J. G. Schulze (pseud. Aenesidemus), who was also critical of Kant, were aware of the weakness of Eberhard's grasp of the critical philosophy.<sup>47</sup> Kant was sufficiently annoyed by Eberhard to compose a specific, stern reply to his criticisms.<sup>48</sup>

We can distinguish between Kant's annoyance at being compared to Berkeley, which is legitimate, and his criticism of the latter, which rests on a dubious reading of the Berkeleyan theory of space. This theory, which Berkeley formulated very early, is already developed in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710, 1734). Berkeley, who attributes many philosophical problems to the misuse of language, does not deny general ideas. But he rejects what he calls abstract general ideas in holding that an idea becomes general in being made to stand for similar particular ideas.<sup>49</sup> Berkeley, who takes a strongly a



posteriori, empiricist approach, holds that what exists is particular, not general; and that whatever exists can be sensed or imagined. He applies this approach to natural science and to mathematics. He rejects as unintelligible Locke's idea of a general triangle<sup>50</sup> and he refutes Newton's conceptions of absolute space, time, and motion. For Newton, relative motion depends on a conception of absolute space, but Berkeley denies that an analysis of motion requires a conception of absolute space, understood as "distinct from that which is perceived by sense, and related to bodies."<sup>51</sup> According to Berkeley, who rejects by anticipation a view Kant will later hold, it is not even possible to imagine space without body.

Kant, who is not inclined to enter into Berkeley's position, wrongly accuses the Irish thinker of holding that space is impossible. Yet Berkeley, who rejects abstract general ideas, merely holds that anything resembling Kant's favored a priori view of space would be untenable. It is further incorrect to suggest that Berkeley's view of space renders any theory of knowledge impossible, since Berkeley clearly proposes such a theory. At most, Berkeley's view of space renders impossible a theory of knowledge along Kantian lines, hence a theory obeying Kant's own epistemological criteria.

#### KANT'S PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Kant's proof of the external world, which is a version of the familiar causal theory of perception rampant in modern philosophy since Descartes, is intended to put right the situation created through the "bad" idealism supposedly professed by Descartes and Berkeley. If Descartes and Berkeley belong to the approach to knowledge described as the new way of ideas, then, by implication, Kant intends to correct a crucial flaw in that

approach. Left open in his proof is how he understands the relation of his own position to the new way of ideas. Suffice it to say that his proof is consistent with any version, old or new, of the way of ideas, hence, a fortiori, with the new way of ideas, in claiming the existence of a mind-independent external world. But it is inconsistent with both versions of the way of ideas in not claiming to know through ideas, or in Kant's language representations, the way the world really is.

In his new version of the proof, Kant once more argues that inner experience demonstrates the existence of external objects. His argument is based on a radicalization (and radical transformation) of a Cartesian argument for purposes that Descartes certainly did not intend. Kant's argument has often been misunderstood, even by careful observers. Jonathan Bennett, for instance, takes it to be an attempt to show that self-consciousness requires experience of an objective realm, which casts Kant in the unfamiliar role of replying to something like Wittgenstein's private language argument.<sup>52</sup> On the contrary, Kant relies on causality, contending that presentations (or phenomena) are always representations (or appearances). To put the same point in other language, according to Kant every phenomenon is also the appearance of something other than itself since, as Kant insists (relying merely on the meaning of "appearance"), otherwise there would be appearances in which nothing appears.<sup>53</sup>

Kant's new proof consists of a single paragraph followed by three notes. The argument unfolds in two overlapping steps, as if Kant were rewriting (but also utilizing for this purpose) a passage already composed earlier. In arguing for the existence of the external world, Kant purports to show that it is only in virtue of the existence of external things that an individual can be self-aware, or self-conscious. Kant makes this argument twice in a single paragraph in separate, incompatible formulations. In the first formulation, he argues successively that he

is self-conscious; that his self-consciousness depends on something permanent; that there must be a mind-independent external thing, as distinguished from its mere representation; and, hence, that he in fact perceives that external things exist. In the second formulation, he maintains that temporal consciousness is linked to consciousness of this possibility, hence depends on the existence of external things as its necessary condition. He paraphrases the second version of the argument as the claim that self-consciousness is at the same time consciousness of external things.

The two versions of the argument differ in important ways, suggesting they arose at different points in the evolution of Kant's position. Although the first argument is stated obscurely, its intention is clear. Kant clearly says that "I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time."<sup>54</sup> Since, according to Kant, time is the form of inner sense, this amounts to saying that I am self-conscious. But since self-consciousness can only be temporal, I must be self-conscious with respect to time, or as Kant says, conscious that I am determined in time.

In the context of his proposed refutation, Kant's first formulation is intended to show that self-consciousness, or more precisely any representation of myself—since he denies immediate knowledge—requires an external cause, hence one or more external objects. Kant argues for this claim on the basis of the "Analogies of Experience." The analogies, which belong to Kant's effort to argue for causality against Hume, are intended to make the anti-Humean point that "experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions."<sup>55</sup> The first analogy states the principle of the permanence of substance, and the second analogy claims that changes necessarily take place according to a causal connection. Taken together, the first two analogies yield the idea that substance, which is permanent, produces changes through a rela-

tion of cause and effect. Kant applies this idea in contending that self-consciousness can be considered as the effect of which permanent substance can be considered as the cause.

This argument holds on two conditions: if and only if causality holds, and if and only if we can reliably reason backward from self-consciousness to its cause in an external object. Kant, who has already made this latter type of argument elsewhere in the *Critique*, simply assumes its validity here.

The second, more rapid formulation consists in the deceptively simple claim that self-consciousness and consciousness of external things are simultaneous. Kant's contention seems doubtful. It could be objected that self-consciousness is never immediate, but always mediated by consciousness. One might claim, as Sartre does, that when one is conscious one can always become self-conscious.<sup>56</sup> Yet it does not follow that if one is conscious one is also simultaneously self-conscious.

In order to defeat "bad" idealism, Kant must show that the existence of external objects is neither false and impossible, nor doubtful, nor indemonstrable, but rather demonstrable and certain. The two formulations of the refutation of idealism differ: the first relies on the success of Kant's refutation of Hume's attack on causality, whereas the second is based on an extension of Descartes' claim about the cogito. The first formulation, which invokes causality, seems to assert that external things exist if and only if causality holds. Since Kant does not here show that causality holds, doubt remains and this form of the refutation of idealism fails.

The second formulation, which in effect relies on equating consciousness and self-consciousness, extends the Cartesian argument beyond Descartes. The same French thinker, who claims that the existence of the cogito is indubitable, appears to make all further claims for the existence of the external world depend on God. To put the same point otherwise, and de-

spite his explicit denial, he certainly seems to fall into the so-called Cartesian circle. Kant's entirely secular argument, which is grounded on reason alone, advances a quasi-Cartesian claim for self-consciousness as well as a non-Cartesian claim that self-consciousness in and of itself is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of external objects. His argument appears to be based on the link between consciousness and self-consciousness. He could have claimed that consciousness is a necessary condition of self-consciousness. Since he does not make this claim, his formulation falls short of establishing his contention.

#### NOTES ON THE "REFUTATION OF IDEALISM"

Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" has been very influential. Doubts about its success later led to Moore's own "Refutation of Idealism," which has determined the analytic attitude toward idealism ever since. In his refutation, Kant further works out a point he makes earlier in the transcendental deduction, in his argument that when I am conscious of myself, or self-conscious, I am in fact conscious only that I am but not of how I appear to myself.<sup>57</sup> Kant here apparently conflates knowledge of one-self, for instance the validity of representation, and existence. In self-perception, one is indeed aware of how one appears, but one is also aware that if one appears, one, hence, necessarily exists. This is a forerunner of the "Refutation of Idealism" in which he argues that inner experience proves the reality of the outer world as its necessary precondition, hence the existence of things outside us supposedly denied by bad idealism.

Kant provides three notes to his proof of the reality of the external world to show that empirical self-consciousness demonstrates the existence of external objects beyond the possibility of doubt, hence decisively defeats "bad" idealism. The notes comment on different aspects of the proof. In the first

note, Kant claims to correct “idealism,” which holds that only inner experience is immediate, by showing, on the contrary, that only outer experience is immediate. This argument is based on Kant’s steadfast denial of privileged access to oneself as a direct consequence of his denial of cognitive intuition. According to Kant, we only know ourselves through sensory experience, by implication in the same way as one knows anything else. Kant believes that the (Cartesian) “I am” is limited to awareness of the existence of, but does not include knowledge of, the subject. Hence, the cogito is not an item of empirical knowledge. But it is not clear what it means to claim to have knowledge that a subject exists if this item of knowledge is not also empirical, hence is not experiential. As Kant himself points out, Cartesian and Cartesian-like claims about the subject certainly appear to be experiential, based on the subject’s experience of itself. Yet this kind of observation is not useful for Kant’s purposes since, unlike Descartes, his task is not to show that the subject exists, but rather to prove that external objects exist. Kant’s contention that empirical knowledge of the self shows the external world exists implies that the epistemological subject is causally affected by one or more external objects.

If we assume that in the representation “I am” Kant is referring to the Cartesian cogito, this note is helpful in distinguishing his view from Descartes’. In one sense, Kant and Descartes are arguing in similar fashion. Descartes proves the existence of the subject in order to make the further claim that some of its ideas provide reliable knowledge of the mind-independent external world. It is only possible to know the world if external objects in it exist. In refuting idealism on the grounds of allegedly placing the existence of external objects in doubt, Kant’s more modest goal is merely to show that external objects exist. Unlike Descartes, who relies on God, Kant, who relies merely on secular reason, does not contend that we can reliably identify

which of our ideas are veridical, hence cognitively trustworthy, and which are not. Yet his contention that any experience proves that we are acted upon by external objects fails to differentiate between real and imagined forms of external causality, hence falls below the level of Descartes' analysis.

Kant's notes on the two versions of his proof appear, strangely enough, to be printed in reverse order. The first note concerns the difference between Kant and Descartes in respect to the second formulation of Kant's proof. In the second note, which in fact concerns the first formulation, Kant takes an Aristotelian line in claiming that we only perceive time through changes in motion of the permanent in space, i.e., through matter which changes position. According to Kant, permanence in space is not perceived, but rather presupposed a priori as the condition of determination of time, hence of inner sense. Elsewhere in his proof, Kant argues on empirical, or a posteriori grounds. Here he is making an a priori argument, roughly the claim that, unless there is something permanent external to the subject, the object cannot be determined in time. This argument amounts to deducing objects from concepts, since the claim is not based on experience, for which it is the supposed condition.<sup>58</sup>

Kant immediately relates this remark to his conception of the subject, asserting that, since the I is not given in intuition, self-consciousness is not an intuition but, as he says, an intellectual representation of spontaneity. We recall that in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, § 16, Kant famously contends that the subject, which, following Descartes, he calls an "I think," as he says, "must be able to accompany all my representations."<sup>59</sup> This cognitive subject is not a human being, but a logical (or epistemological) subject that corresponds to what must be presupposed a priori as the condition of experience and knowledge of objects.

In the third note, Kant briefly addresses the problem of error. Kant's proof relies on the causal influence of external things. It

is obviously possible that one could be mistaken about a supposed causal relation. Any supposed instance of what Kant calls the intuitive representation of outer things might be in error. Errors occur through a kind of repetition of previous perceptions, which must, he claims, be due to the fact that there are in fact external things. We recall Locke's claim that complex ideas are composed of simple ideas, which simply cannot be wrong, since by definition they match up one to one with what is in independence of the mind. Yet unless Kant is buying into this kind of simplistic empiricism, he has no way to show that any so-called inner representation is not, as he admits in a kind of Cartesian aside, a dream or a delusion. Kant is careful to point out that his sole aim is to prove that inner experience is possible only on the condition of outer experience. Yet this argument fails to show that there is anything which corresponds to inner experience; it shows only that it is possible that there is.

#### FURTHER THOUGHTS ON "BAD" IDEALISM AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Kant had been wrestling with "bad" idealism in various publications at least since the *Nova Dilucidatio* (1755), published more than three decades earlier than the first *Critique*. As if the foregoing were insufficient to address the problem, Kant comes back to this theme in the new introduction written for the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In a passage about the new edition, he contends, improbably enough, that though the exposition could be improved, to change anything at all in the substance of the argument would lead to contradictions in human reason itself.<sup>60</sup> Kant, who reports he is concerned with the misinterpretation of the paralogisms concerning rational psychology, indicates that the only addition in the new edition is another refutation of psychological idealism. We



remember his objections against the putative psychologist, who mistakenly takes mere appearances for things in themselves. As if he were still dissatisfied with the new "Refutation of idealism" added in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant now returns to this theme in a lengthy footnote representing his last word in this treatise on the topic. Both the strengths and weaknesses of Kant's various refutations of "bad" idealism are on display in this final restatement of the view.

Kant begins by distinguishing between "bad" idealism, whose importance is negligible, and the problem to which it points, that is, the existence of external objects. In famously claiming it is a scandal that the existence of external things must be accepted on faith,<sup>61</sup> he implies that his own revised proof is not wholly satisfactory, before reformulating a passage in the initial version of the "Refutation of Idealism." To evaluate the changes, it is useful to reproduce the two passages.

In the initial formulation, Kant writes: "This permanent cannot, however, be something in me, since it is only through this permanent that my existence in time can itself be determined."<sup>62</sup> In a word, according to Kant there must be external things, in short a mind-independent external world. In the revised passage, Kant writes: "But this permanent cannot be an intuition in me. For all grounds of determination of my existence which are to be met with in me are representations; and as representations themselves they require a permanent distinct from them, in relation to which their change, and so my existence in the time wherein they change, may be determined."<sup>63</sup>

In both the first and the second formulations, Kant argues experience demonstrates there are real mind-independent external objects of experience. The criterion of the latter's existence is apparently their permanence. It is unclear if "permanence" means they endure over a period of time, or through time, or again that they are unchanging, hence eternal. In both

formulations, Kant is working with a dualistic analysis opposing subjects and objects in interaction. In the two instances, Kant's argument supposes a three-part relation between a subject that perceives, a representation that is the content of perception, and what is represented. In the first formulation, Kant distinguishes between the perception and the perceived, or the representation and the represented, in stressing the effect of the subject on the form of a representation. In the second formulation, in contending that representations require the existence of something represented which is accompanied by a subject, he stresses a little more clearly, in a way consistent with his idea that every representation must be able to be accompanied by a subject, that the external object, which is represented, affects the subject.

The main gain in the new formulation seems to lie in additional clarity in Kant's exposition of his position, not in a doctrinal change. The obvious objection, which Kant immediately raises against himself, is that mere awareness of things in me (roughly being aware of ideas in the mind) does not suffice to demonstrate they correspond to anything outside the mind. This quasi-Cartesian formulation suggests two points. First, from Kant's angle of vision, Descartes is unsuccessful in showing that ideas in the mind correspond to external things, or even that there is an external world at all. Second, a necessary condition of being able to show that our ideas in fact match up with external things must be proof that there is an external world, or external things, whether or not they can be known. Unlike Descartes, Kant, who denies knowledge of things in themselves, is not claiming to know mind-independent things as they are. He aims only to establish the weaker claim that the world exists.

Kant's familiar argument unfolds as follows. Self-consciousness of existence in time is equivalent to empirical consciousness of my own existence. Since self-consciousness of my own existence is linked to consciousness of a relation to the exter-

nal world, inner consciousness is inextricably linked to the outer in experience, in brief to the existence of the external world. In other words, outer sense, or space, is inseparable from inner experience, or time.

Kant now adds a new element by bringing in his denial of intellectual intuition as mandating the existence of the external world. In the absence of intellectual intuition, self-consciousness is possible only because we are in fact affected by external things. In other words, inner intuition is not intellectual, but sensible, hence dependent on something permanent not in, but outside, me, and to which I stand in relation. It follows that outer sense, or space, is linked to inner sense, or time.

This line of argument shows that inner experience depends on the existence of external things, and hence that these must exist. Now beginning a different line of argument, Kant claims that consciousness of external things and consciousness of myself as determined in time (since time is the form of inner sense) are equally certain. In a word, I know myself as well as the world with the same likelihood. But, one might ask, do we in fact know either one? Kant, who is aware of the difficulty, answers by (once again) drawing attention to the (theoretical) distinction between inner experience and imagination. He contends, with this in mind, that in each case we can only relate intuitions to particular objects by means of rules through which inner experience is distinguished from imagination. But, on the crucial question of how this is supposed to work, Kant gives us no help; and it is entirely unclear how we can make out this distinction in practice. It seems fair to say that, at least in this respect, his account falls below the level of Descartes. The French philosopher, as Fichte later will do, advances a criterion to identify contents of consciousness that are able to qualify as experience, namely the effect of an external cause, from mere imagination.

Kant hastens to add that in his account outer experience, or

the effect of external things on the cognitive subject, is presupposed. Yet this addition to the argument not only does not resolve the problem; it further begs the point at issue, since he needs to show there is not only in principle, but in fact, experience of external things.

Kant further notes the difference between the representation of something permanent and a permanent representation. According to Kant, even a transitory representation of something permanent refers to an object that does not change. That thing, which is different from my representation of it, is further part of the determination of, or the constraints exercised on, my existence. But, Kant concedes, we cannot explain either this influence, or the way in which we, as the cognitive subject(s), endure through time.

Kant's critical reaction to idealism is more often mentioned in passing than studied, more often misrepresented in passing than analyzed. I have devoted so much attention to it for three reasons. First, it is obvious that the view advanced in the critical philosophy is vitally important for anyone interested in modern forms of "idealism." Second, Kant's critique of "bad" idealism is crucial to understand the formulation of Kant's favored conception of "good" idealism. Third, it is necessary to grasp Kant's position to comprehend the influence of his idealist position on the later debate.

We can summarize Kant's rejection of "bad" idealism as correcting a mistaken denial of the existence of external objects which, for Kant, undercuts the dualism he favors in holding that inner experience is possible only on the basis of outer experience. Kant understands experience in the first instance as the subject being affected by mind-independent, but unknowable external objects. The crucial weakness of Kant's argument lies in an inability to show there is in fact any experience as he understands it. It does not follow, to use Kantian terminology, that, if we

are affected, we are affected by a mind-independent, real external world. That is a gratuitous assumption, which Kant cannot establish, but which lies at the basis of his position. If we concede that Kant is right about the existence of the external world as a necessary condition of experience, it does not follow, on other than dogmatic grounds, that there is any experience in Kant's sense of the term. In this respect, Kant's secular attempt to establish the existence of the external world through reason alone is no better, and arguably weaker, than the Cartesian effort to do so by relying on God.

### HEGELIAN CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN IDEALISM

I have devoted so much space to Kant's critique of "bad" idealism in view of its triple importance for the formulation of his own position, for post-Kantian German idealism, and for the later reaction against idealism in general, particularly among analytic thinkers. There is arguably an important distinction between Kant's accomplishments and the thrust of the critical philosophy. In order to be faithful to the spirit of the critical philosophy, later German idealists were critical of Kant's position, hence critical of his own favored conception of "idealism." The entire post-Kantian German idealist movement, including Hegel's position, constitutes a constructive critique of Kantian idealism with the aim of carrying further and finally completing Kant's project according to different, sometimes incompatible readings of its intrinsic spirit.

The importance of Hegel's reaction to Kant cannot be overestimated. Hegel's critique of Kant is roughly as significant as, but very different from, Aristotle's critique of Plato. Aristotle criticizes Plato in order to replace the position he attributes to his great teacher with his own position. Hegel criticizes Kant with the intention of realizing what he presents as the unreal-

ized idealist impulse in the critical philosophy. His aim is not to reject Kant's theories as such but rather, in separating the conceptual wheat from the chaff, or as Kant says the spirit from the letter, to develop the Kantian philosophy beyond Kant. It is wrong, then, to see Hegel as simply contradicting Kant on every major point, or again as in principle opposed to all the main themes of the critical philosophy. It is right to see Hegel as participating in the general effort to carry further and to complete the critical philosophy.

If, for present purposes, we rely on Kant's own distinction between the spirit and the letter of his position, we can say that post-Kantian German idealism falls roughly into two chronological groups. Those, like Fichte, who were chronologically very close to Kant, were more interested than later thinkers in remaining, or in at least appearing to remain, as faithful as possible to Kant's own vision. In Fichte's case, which is admittedly extreme, this took the form of cloaking himself in the master's mantle, even to the extent of claiming to propose nothing other than Kant's own position, or at least the position he ought to have held, in different terms. Fichte, who was also a first-rate thinker, poses throughout his entire career more successfully than his many contemporary rivals as the only true Kantian, the only one to understand the critical philosophy. He was in turn imitated, to a lesser extent, by Schelling, another first-rate thinker, who also posed for a short period ending in a public break between master and disciple as a true Fichtean. In both cases, the views that Fichte and Schelling advance are influenced by Kant, but their views are always at least partly inconsistent with the view they claim to support, hence recognizably their own. As time passes, and as the chronological distance to Kant increases, later thinkers are increasingly less interested in claiming a special relation to Kant, or even in remaining within the framework of his position, however understood, but more

interested in realizing its potential in ways that increasingly diverge from anything attributable to Kant. Hegel, who never straightforwardly claims to be a disciple of any single thinker, begins by posing as an adept of Schelling. Yet he adopts an antagonistic attitude toward the critical philosophy as early as his first philosophical publication, in the course of formulating the initial version of an original position he later deepens and expands but never basically alters.

Hegel counts as the most interesting and certainly the most influential critic of Kantian idealism in post-Kantian German idealism and in general. It could be argued that much of what is valuable in contemporary philosophy, specifically including the centrally important effort to make history into a central category of human thought and culture, results from the continued influence of Hegel's very fruitful reworking, under the influence of Fichte and Schelling, of the problems and themes of the critical philosophy.<sup>64</sup>

There are several reasons for Hegel's sharply critical relation to Kant. First, Hegel is not only deeply influenced by Kant, but unlike Fichte and Schelling, he is also overtly critical, sometimes even apparently contemptuous of, the author of the critical philosophy. Second, Hegel, who began to write slightly later than Fichte and Schelling, and who has before him the example of his great idealist colleagues, sees, perhaps even more clearly than they, a multitude of difficulties in Kant's position as well as in its later reformulations in post-Kantian German idealism, above all in the works of those colleagues. Even when he was only beginning to write, Hegel was more sensitive to the history of philosophy, including the latest developments, than Fichte, who did not know the prior tradition in detail, or Schelling, who did, but was always more inclined to react creatively than critically or constructively to prior theories. Third, Hegel is distinguished, even in his very early philosophical writings, by his

concern to resolve specific issues through immanent critique of prior positions. Hegel's critique of Kant in terms of the intrinsic aims of the critical philosophy is pursued everywhere in his texts, on nearly every page, in a constant effort, not merely to criticize the letter of the critical philosophy, but also to carry its spirit beyond Kant in realizing the Copernican turn.

#### HEGEL ON KANT IN THE *DIFFERENZSCHRIFT*

Hegel's initial reading of Kant in the *Differenzschrift* is developed and deepened, but persists basically unchanged, in his later writings. Hegel, who is slow to make up his mind, does not often change it. His early reaction to Kant, which already determines the direction of his later development, leading distantly through many twists and turns to his mature position, is inseparable from his initial reaction to Fichte and Schelling. In the immediate reception of the critical philosophy, Fichte was distinguished by his loudly and frequently expressed claim, which was rejected by Kant, to be the only one to understand the critical philosophy.<sup>65</sup> The very idea that there might be a single correct reading of a given position now seems faintly quaint, a product of an earlier age. But the idea was important to Kant, who thought he was misunderstood by his initial set of readers, and it was regarded as reasonable immediately after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It has already been noted that Fichte's claim to be a seamless Kantian was accepted by the young Schelling and the young Hegel. Hegel regarded Fichte's reading of Kant as a central element in working out his position and further as having practical consequences. In an early letter, Hegel goes so far as to suggest that in completing the critical philosophy, Fichte will bring about a revolution in Germany.<sup>66</sup> He became more critical of Fichte when, several years later, he began to formulate his own position. The *Differenz-*



*schrift*, which is ostensibly directed toward bringing out the difference or differences between the views of Fichte and Schelling as mere variants “located” within the single true system of philosophy pioneered by Kant, shows that after Fichte, and the new form of Fichte’s system invented by Schelling, at the time a self-proclaimed disciple of Fichte, the critical philosophy still remains incomplete.

Hegel’s concern with knowledge is still not sufficiently stressed in the literature. His approach to Kant is mainly and very specifically epistemological. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel insists on the need to separate the speculative side of Kant’s view from the rest, in a word the wheat from the chaff, in terms of the Kantian distinction between the spirit and the letter. Kant’s commitment to two incompatible epistemological models, the representationalism of the new way of ideas, and the constructivism of the Copernican revolution in philosophy, reappears in Hegel’s approach to the problem of knowledge, hence in his effort to complete the Copernican turn. On the one hand, Hegel is interested in Kant’s speculative approach culminating in the deduction of the categories as the final, but necessary step in a representational approach to knowledge. This approach is an updated version of Cartesian foundationalism, which is intrinsically linear, running seamlessly from the supposedly presuppositionless deduction of the categories to knowledge. Hegel is attracted to a speculative approach to philosophy but disinterested in anything like a deduction which Kant makes central to the critical philosophy. On the other hand, Hegel is attracted to a very different, intrinsically circular approach to knowledge, which rejects the epistemological foundationalism central to Kantian representationalism in offering a constructivist epistemological alternative.

Kant makes knowledge depend on an a priori analysis of its possibility. The central point lies in the proposed deduction of

the categories, or principles of the understanding. Kant, who was dissatisfied with his initial formulation, later provided a second formulation whose relation to the first one, despite extensive discussion, remains unclear. Hegel, who is clearly unconvinced by either of Kant's two deductions, and seems never to have been attracted by the very idea of a deduction of the categories, says very clearly that Kant hypostatizes the things in themselves. He further complains that Kant takes a non-dynamic approach to the categories, which fails to express the absolute. According to Hegel, Fichte's contribution lies in being the first to have deduced the categories, which is genuine idealism.<sup>67</sup> Yet this positive comment, which suggests the importance, if not of Kant's specific contribution to this point, at least of the task which he undertook, is puzzling since there is no effort on Hegel's part to do anything of the kind either here or perhaps even later.

Hegel's criticisms are directed against the letter, but not the spirit of Kant's theory. According to Hegel, who follows Fichte's interpretation of Kant, the principle of speculation consists in the identity of subject and object, illustrated in the forms of the understanding (*Verstand*). Kant's approach is problematic in that, in substituting understanding for reason, he inverts the real relation. Fichte's identity of ego = ego is a genuine expression of the authentic principle of speculation, which he soon abandons in his efforts at system. Yet Fichte's view is also problematic. Since he only presents the absolute as it appears in reflection, the subject-object turns out to be a subjective subject-object. This reading of Fichte's position amounts to the claim, probably under Schelling's influence, that Fichte's theory, or at least the version of it discussed by Fichte at this time, is merely subjective, hence lacking an objective side. More precisely, Fichte's position has an intrinsic dualism on the one hand in the pure concept of reason and speculation, and on the

other in the unfortunate equation drawn between reason and pure consciousness, which Hegel sees as raising finite reason to the status of the absolute. Schelling complements the subjective unity in Fichte with an objective unity, and then further unifies them both in another unity. In other words, Schelling provides the unity of subjectivity and objectivity on a further, absolute level.

To summarize, in his review of the efforts of Fichte and Schelling to build on Kant, Hegel accepts speculative unity, or the unity of unity and diversity, which Kant earlier advances as the criterion of knowledge in the Copernican turn. There is an important distinction between Kant's criterion of knowledge and the strategy he proposes to explain its possibility. Kant's argument, as Reinhold quickly noted,<sup>68</sup> is foundationalist. Epistemological foundationalism is invariably linear, running from an initial principle or principles known with certainty to the rigorous deduction of the remainder of the theory. Descartes is one of the first important modern thinkers to propose a clearly foundationalist epistemological model. Like Descartes, Kant also insists on the idea of a perfect system leading from a single original premise, understood as the hallmark of science, to knowledge. In the critical philosophy, the argument culminates in the transcendental unity of understanding, Kant's version of the Cartesian cogito. Hegel follows Kant's argument in two ways. First, he suggests, as noted above, that Fichte is the first thinker to provide the necessary deduction. Second, he further suggests, following Schelling, that Schelling's philosophy of nature supplements Fichte's transcendental philosophy, which is itself intended as identical with Kant's critical philosophy.

Hegel's other line of argument in the *Differenzschrift*, which is based on a suggestion in Fichte, contradicts epistemological foundationalism, for which it proposes a nonlinear, unfounded alternative. The critical philosophy, which claims to deduce the

categories, is foundationalist. It aims to base theory of knowledge on a version of Cartesian foundationalism suitably updated and transformed for Kant's purposes. Hegel is specifically critical of foundationalism of any kind. Hegel's account of Reinhold in the *Differenzschrift* criticizes his foundationalist reconstruction of the already foundationalist critical philosophy while proposing an alternative, nonfoundationalist epistemological strategy.

Reinhold's overall project to found and ground (*Fundierungs- und Grundierungstendenz*) cognitive claims corresponds to Kant's clearly Cartesian aim to provide a final, or ultimate ground, or foundation, for epistemology. It has been noted above that Reinhold, who sees that Kant relies on a theoretical foundation, or deduction of the categories, substitutes for it an empirical, or practical foundation. In effect, in a way that clearly runs counter to Kant's intentions, Reinhold transforms the critical philosophy from an a priori to an a posteriori theory in order to strengthen it. Reinhold's effort to restate the critical philosophy through a practical foundation was criticized by Maimon as revising, though not improving but rather weakening the critical philosophy.<sup>69</sup> Hegel, who perceives that the difficulty is not the revision of the critical philosophy, which is unacceptable as it is, nor the type of foundation invoked, but the very idea of an approach to knowledge through foundationalism, responds, following Kant, by distinguishing constructivism, which, following Kant and such intermediary figures as Fichte and Schelling, he favors, from epistemological foundationalism, which he rejects. According to Hegel, who at the very beginning of his philosophical career already leaves foundationalism of any kind behind, every theory justifies, or legitimates, its cognitive claims as it develops. It follows that an initial justification of claims to know prior to entering on the path to knowledge is neither necessary nor possible.

The difference between Kant and Hegel with respect to epistemological justification leads to very different attitudes toward Newtonian natural science. In his celebrated comparison between his epistemological approach and Copernican astronomy, Kant claims that Copernicus' brilliant hypothesis was proven by Newton.<sup>70</sup> Kant has in mind going beyond a simple hypothesis in demonstrating his claim to know in an unrevisable manner, which is demanded by his acceptance of a foundationalist approach. Kant refers to Newton in claiming to ground a theory of natural science that its inventor believed made no hypotheses but rather relied on empirical experience in an a priori, non-empirical, foundationalist position. Hegel, on the contrary, who may have had this passage in mind, also refers to Newton, but does so in abandoning both the a priori plane and foundationalism for experience. He compares his own innovation to the universal law of gravitation in suggesting the invention of another, more modest, but more easily defended innovation, in effect a second Copernican revolution in philosophy through simply abandoning foundationalism. In separating the difficulty of proving a hypothesis from the hypothetical character of all cognitive claims, Hegel draws the consequences of giving up epistemological foundationalism in suggesting there is not and cannot ever be a final, or absolute justification of claims to know. Knowledge claims are never a priori, always a posteriori, hence always subject to later correction by further experience. Specific claims, which are increasingly supported by the unfolding of the theory in which they are embedded, are never immune to later refutation.<sup>71</sup>

Foundationalist theories are invariably linear, running from initial principles through some kind of deductive procedure to what strictly derives from them. In adopting a circular theory of epistemological justification, Hegel builds on Fichte. By implication in a text on the concept of science written in the same

year as the *Science of Knowledge* and explicitly in his *Personal Thoughts about Elementary Philosophy* (*Eigne Meditationen zur Elementarphilosophie*) preceding the composition of the initial version of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte suggests that epistemological justification or legitimation of claims to know is never linear, but always and necessarily circular. Kant, who insists on the importance of grounding theory in practice, is unable to do so because of the resolutely a priori character of his approach to knowledge. In proposing a wholly a posteriori justification of claims to know, Hegel, in following Fichte, completes a shift to the priority of the practical, which is further expanded in Marx. In simply dropping the a priori, transcendental aspect of Kantian idealism, Hegel draws the conclusion contained in Kant's own shift from representationalism to constructivism. For Kant, epistemological constitution is a mysterious operation that cannot, he claims, be described. In Hegel's position, the Copernican turn is recast as the social activity of finite human beings, and knowledge is no longer a priori and linear, but rather a fully a posteriori, circular process.

#### HEGEL'S MATURE ATTITUDE TOWARD KANTIAN IDEALISM

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel approaches Kantian idealism as incomplete, as in effect an unfinished project. His consistently critical attitude toward Kant obscures the extent to which his own writings, including all his mature texts, continue to depend on his reading of the critical philosophy. His later suggestion that Fichte has completed the Kantian philosophy,<sup>72</sup> which closely corresponds to Fichte's own estimate of his achievement, refutes Kant's more negative evaluation of Fichte's contribution and mistakenly suggests a difference, not in degree, but in kind, between Hegel and German idealism.

For if Fichte has already completed the critical philosophy, then Hegel neither completes nor even further develops it. It would be more accurate to say that Fichte completed, or at least contributed to the completion of, a version of the Kantian program, which Hegel, who is critical of both Kant and Fichte, but influenced by both, further develops under the influence of Schelling and others, in his own position.

Hegel's Kantian suggestion in the *Differenzschrift* that Kant's position needs to be completed according to its spirit correctly suggests a critical stance with respect to its letter that runs throughout his later writings. In subsequent texts Hegel criticizes the Kantian a priori approach to knowledge while working out an a posteriori position initially sketched in the *Differenzschrift*. The critical philosophy turns on an examination of the faculty of pure reason. In the initial paragraph of the introduction (§ 73) to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel criticizes Kant's allegedly natural but mistaken assumption that it is possible to examine the faculty of knowledge, understood either as the instrument to get hold of the absolute or as the medium to discover it, prior to cognition.<sup>73</sup> His suggestion that the conditions and the process of knowledge cannot be separated disqualifies a priori inquiry of all kinds, including Kant's transcendental analysis of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge whatsoever. Hegel returns to this point repeatedly in the *Encyclopedia Logic*<sup>74</sup> and in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*<sup>75</sup> in comparing Kant's insistence on analyzing the instrument of knowledge, the basis of his critical philosophy before we employ it and the central idea in the critical philosophy, to the supposed scholastic effort to swim without going in the water. Hegel's simple but (for Kant) devastating point is that we cannot study the faculty of knowledge without employing it, and that in fact we already know it.<sup>76</sup>

In the *Differenzschrift* Hegel follows Fichte's view that the

critical philosophy turns on the assertion of the identity of subject and object. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel begins his account of reason, after his discussions of consciousness and self-consciousness, by sketching not a negative but rather a positive relation to otherness, which he calls idealism. One difference between Hegel and Kant lies in their respective attitudes toward epistemological representationalism. In the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte rejects representationalism as Kant understands it while simultaneously claiming to deduce it. Hegel, who is clearer on this point and, unlike Fichte, does not feel constrained to appear to be an orthodox Kantian, rejects representationalism in any form. In the lengthy passage on the certainty and truth of reason (§§ 231–239), Hegel repeatedly insists that the unity of subject and object advanced in reason’s certainty of being all reality must not only be abstractly, hence dogmatically asserted, but must also be concretely demonstrated. This is impossible for Kantian idealism, which features merely abstract reason based on the dualism of subject and object. Abstract reason, as he points out, merely proclaims that reason is true. Yet in virtue of its inability to demonstrate the unity of subject and object, or, as Hegel says in direct reference to Kant, the thing in itself, it remains caught in a contradiction from which it cannot escape.<sup>77</sup> Hegel further remarks that talk of objects as external to reason is no longer possible.<sup>78</sup> The effect of this remark is twofold: it rejects the dualistic cognitive model presupposed in any form of representationalism, and it suggests, following Kant’s Copernican insight, that for idealism the subject-object distinction is only relative, or a distinction within unity.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel is principally concerned with evaluating the contribution of his contemporaries Fichte, Schelling, and Reinhold toward realizing the Kantian project. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (*Vorlesungen über die*



*Geschichte der Philosophie*), he extends his reading of the debate about Kant to the entire Western philosophical tradition. It is then not by chance that he begins the section on modern German philosophy with a statement linking philosophy generally, the Kantian moment, and his own position. Here we find Hegel claiming that the theme of idealism sounded in Kant is not eccentric but rather central to his own idea of the philosophical tradition. But this theme needs to be restated in terms of the concept: "The task of modern German philosophy is . . . summed up in taking as its object the unity of thought and being, which is the fundamental idea of philosophy generally, and comprehending it, that is, in laying hold of the inmost significance, the concept."<sup>79</sup>

Hegel's initial reaction to Kant occurs in the *Differenzschrift* and his first mature reaction to Kant emerges in the *Phenomenology*. In later writings, Hegel considers Kant indirectly virtually everywhere but directly in only two main places. One is in the *Encyclopedia Logic* in a passage that is all the more significant because it has no equivalent in the *Science of Logic*. The other place is in the careful discussion of Kant in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, in an account of the "Preliminary Conception" of scientific logic, Hegel draws attention to three positions of thought in regard to objectivity. Following Kant, he regards metaphysics, the first position, as merely dogmatic. Further following Kant, he rejects claims for immediate knowing, which he apparently associates with Jacobi. In the long passage on the second position of thought in regard to objectivity (§§ 37–60), he discusses empiricism (§§ 37–39, pp. 76–80) and then the critical philosophy (§§ 40–60, pp. 80–108).

According to Hegel, empiricism, which responds to the need for concrete content, is based on the principle that what is true must be given in experience. In that sense, Hegel is also an em-

piricist. Hegel sees the critical philosophy as accepting experience as the basis of cognition, which, for Kant, concerns only appearances. Kant's position is based on the identity of the subject, which is the basis of the categories through which the contents of perception are worked up into objects of experience and knowledge. As Hegel points out, the categories cannot grasp the absolute (§ 44, p. 87) since, by definition, they are inadequate to know things in themselves, and can only strive to know them when reason is misused for this purpose.

The reading of Kant in this passage is interesting on two counts. One is the appearance of a detailed discussion of an important figure in the context of a theory of logic. That is at least unusual for the way logic is now understood. The other is the assimilation of the critical philosophy to empiricism within the framework of the second position of thought in regard to objectivity. In calling attention to the relation between empiricism and the critical philosophy, Hegel accepts Kant's repeated claim that his position is committed to transcendental idealism as well as to empirical realism. Hegel's critical point is that in virtue of its limitation to appearances, Kantian empiricism fails to reach concreteness. The difficulty is certainly not the commitment to empiricism, which Hegel also accepts. It is rather the specific Kantian commitment to a type of empiricism that fails the test of reaching actuality.

Hegel provides a fuller but essentially unchanged reading of Kant in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In his *Lectures*, Hegel invents the history of philosophy as we know it in the initial philosophical reading of the philosophical tradition in modern times, the first since Aristotle, perhaps even the first such reading to be undertaken. Aristotle, who distinguishes between philosophy and the history of philosophy, typically passes in review theories he rejects while offering his own alternative. Hegel, for whom philosophy is continuous with the philosophi-

cal tradition, who rejects any distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy, consciously attempts to take up earlier positions into his own position and to build upon them. He also provides a detailed reading of Kant against the background of the tradition, in the process “relativizing” the critical philosophy—which pretends to solve the problem of knowledge absolutely, that is, in a way which cannot later be put into question or relativized—as merely another philosophy in the Western philosophical tradition.

Hegel, as already noted, is slow to make up his mind, but unlike Kant, only rarely changes it later on. As in the *Differenzschrift*, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel once again identifies with the Fichtean reading of Kant in describing the task of philosophy as demonstrating the unity of thought and being. Kant’s contribution lies in providing a merely formulaic approach, which still lacks what Hegel refers to as conceptual necessity. Fichte is the first thinker to grasp self-consciousness as concrete, and Schelling’s contribution lies in presenting the absolute as true in and for itself.<sup>80</sup> Hegel now develops this view, including his specific view of Kant as on the right track but falling short, in his account of the newest German philosophy.

As in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel provides a detailed, objective, but also critical reading of Kant. This latter version of Hegel’s take on Kant deepens features of earlier versions while adding new ones. These include a loose parallel between Kant and Jacobi, which now appears for the first time, and a series of comments on Kant’s “Refutation of Idealism” and his transcendental idealism. The latter also include a number of sarcastic or even demeaning remarks, such as the remark that Kant’s position is “a good introduction to philosophy.”<sup>81</sup>

Hegel begins with a general account of the Kantian philoso-

phy before turning to more detailed themes. Kant's philosophy, which provides an account of the view that only appearances, but nothing true, can be known, brings knowledge into consciousness and self-consciousness while making it subjective and finite. Hegel considers three main themes in Kant's position. First, in adopting Kant's claim in the *Prolegomena*, he suggests the critical philosophy is conceived as a response to Hume. In answering Hume, who shows that generality and necessity are not in perception, Kant "internalizes" them in the subject. Second, Kant's position is critical in that it provides a critique of our faculties of knowledge since, according to Kant, we need to inquire about the suitability of our cognitive capacities before embarking on the road to knowledge. As he did in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel again notes that Kant describes the knowing capacity as an instrument before pointing to the contradiction inherent in identifying its nature and limits a priori, which is prior to and apart from embarking on the road to knowledge.<sup>82</sup> Third, Kant raises the question of how synthetic a priori judgments are possible. Though the idea is important, Hegel's remark that in carrying it out Kant remains within a psychological and empirical perspective amounts to claiming that the critical philosophy is not, as Kant insists, transcendental, that is, beyond psychologism, but merely another form of psychologism.<sup>83</sup> Hegel emphasizes this charge throughout his discussion of the critical philosophy, for instance, with respect to Kant's view of theoretical philosophy in general<sup>84</sup> as well as with respect to the latter's view of reason.<sup>85</sup>

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), who was three generations older than Hegel, developed an original position based on feeling. He is important as a critic of Spinoza, for his own position, and as one of Kant's most trenchant early critics. Jacobi, who contends the Kantian philosophy leads to nihilism, famously rejected the concept of the thing in itself through the

slogan: "Without the thing in itself I cannot enter the Kantian philosophy, and with it I cannot remain."<sup>86</sup> He understood the critical philosophy as a purely subjective idealism, which denies mind-independent objective reality. Objects are no more than the subjective contents of our minds and, since there is no independent reality, knowledge is limited to representations.

Hegel, who was impressed by Jacobi, considered his position in a number of texts, including *Faith and Knowledge* (*Glauben und Wissen*, 1802), the *Encyclopedia Logic*, and the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In the *Differenzschrift*, in passing he attributes to Jacobi the view that "systems are organized structures of not-knowing."<sup>87</sup> Here and in all later writings, Hegel follows Jacobi's view of Kant and Fichte as subjective idealists. On this basis, he infers that subjective idealism falls short of objective idealism, which is illustrated by Schelling. In *Faith and Knowledge*, which appeared one year after the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel treats Kant, Fichte and Jacobi in separate but parallel discussions. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where Jacobi again receives separate treatment, Hegel contrasts Kant with Jacobi as two philosophers of subjectivity. According to Hegel, Jacobi and Kant, each in his own way, deny any knowledge of the absolute.<sup>88</sup> Both Jacobi and Kant react against Hume.<sup>89</sup> Jacobi and Kant also share an aversion to Wolff's dogmatic metaphysics.<sup>90</sup> Kant's critical philosophy ends in a dualism between appearances and things in themselves, while denying knowledge of reality, and Jacobi claims immediate knowledge of God. Yet both theories are equally unsatisfactory in that they exhibit, as Hegel sardonically says, "the sloth of reason . . . liberated from every call to reflect . . ."<sup>91</sup>

In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" makes its appearance in the context of an account of his transition from categories to the empirical. Hegel, who cites Kant's view on this topic at length, is unhappy both

with the view Kant refutes and with the replacement view in the critical philosophy. Here as in other texts Hegel evaluates Kant with respect to a form of idealism that provides an adequate theory of knowledge. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel takes Schelling's part against Fichte in rejecting subjective idealism, the position which he attributes to the latter, as unable to reach objective knowledge. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he applies this criterion to refute Kant as well. He begins by noting that Kant, who understands idealism as the idea that we cannot know the metaphysical real, what Hegel calls the absolute and Kant calls things in themselves, rejects empirical or material idealism. Hegel regards both the idealist view that nothing exists outside of my consciousness, which Kant rejects, and the further idealist claim that things exist outside of my consciousness, which Kant accepts, as equally unacceptable. Berkeley holds that truth does not lie either in things or in appearances, but rather in their limitations and contingency. Kant answers Berkeley by noting that empirical consciousness does not exist in itself any more than empirical things exist in themselves. Yet the Kantian subject, who remains individual, as distinguished from general consciousness, fails to reach reason.<sup>92</sup> More generally, any refutation of one form of subjective idealism by another form of subjective idealism is still insufficient to reach knowledge in a meaningful sense of the term.

Hegel criticizes Kant's views of reason as well as of its abuses. He finds Kant's distinction between reason and understanding useful for an account of how reason brings forth ideas. But he rejects the Kantian view of the idea as a merely abstract universal, which is not concrete, since, in Hegel's words, Kant fails to deduce its determinations. Kant advances two reasons for the claim that reason cannot know the unconditioned. First, it has the desire but not the capacity to know the infinite. Yet Hegel holds that Kant is incorrect in restricting knowledge to sense

perception. Second, Kant holds that, in misapplying categories intended for phenomena to the infinite, we become entangled in contradictions under the heading of paralogisms, antinomies, and the idea of God.

As before, Hegel suggests that Kant, who insists on the difference between dogmatism and critical philosophy, is himself a dogmatic thinker. For the Kantian cure for dogmatic philosophy is not better than the malady for which it is intended. Hegel's objection is most developed with respect to the antinomies, or contradictions that, according to Kant, arise in reason's illegitimate idea of the unconditioned. He accepts the four contradictions Kant identifies while noting that every concept harbors contradictions. In response to Kant, who suggests that the antinomies belong not to things but to our way of looking at them, Hegel points out that he does not see that it is not things, but self-consciousness itself that is contradictory.<sup>93</sup>

Hegel goes on to consider Kant's views of religion, ethics, aesthetics, and natural science. Since we are concerned here with idealism as an approach to the theory of knowledge, we need not follow Hegel further in his account of the critical philosophy. It will suffice to mention Hegel's summary, where he again sounds the Copernican theme in passing judgment on Kant's philosophy as a whole. Here, in what must count as the mature Hegel's final word on Kant, hence on Kantian idealism, he summarizes his objection, sounded as early as the *Differenzschrift* and restated in the introductory passage on the newest German philosophy in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,

Hegel's objection lies in the difference, which Fichte implicitly acknowledges in the *Science of Knowledge*, between the unity of thought and being that is the basis of theoretical philosophy, and the disunity of thought and being that is the basis of ethical theories. The limitation of Kantian philosophy does

not lie in its claim for the unity of thought and being, but rather in its abstract form, devoid of content. In characteristically sibylline language, Hegel acknowledges that thinking for Kant is an absolute concept containing real difference within it. The limit, according to Hegel, lies in the tension between the claim that knowledge is empirically valid and the further claim that we cannot know reality. Hence Kant limits himself merely to what can be given to the understanding in a philosophy of the understanding, which simply evacuates reason. "This is a complete philosophy of the Understanding which simply renounces Reason."<sup>94</sup> Since the critical philosophy naively accepts the view of the ordinary person, Kant's position only pretends to be, but in fact is not, critical. The situation is not improved by the critical philosophy's typical but lifeless appeal to triplicity. Kant's basic distinction between the understanding and reason relies on an unresolved dualism between subject and reality. Kant lacks the negative, which Hegel, in a nod to Fichte, calls the "ought." From Hegel's angle of vision, Kant's contribution lies less in a specific achievement than in pointing toward what still needs to be done in making the problem of thought and thinking an essential task. Through his emphasis on systematic rigor, he pretends to demonstrate how particular thoughts follow necessarily from a unity, and he helps thought to spread into all areas. In a word, he points to, but does not satisfy, the demand for concreteness, which his successors, Fichte and Schelling, and by implication also Hegel, are all concerned to fulfill. In guise of a conclusion, Hegel writes: "This is the requisite of concrete thought; while in the Kantian result, which is that of phenomenon, an empty thought alone was present. . . . There was, therefore, to be found a yearning desire for content, for truth, since man could not possibly return to the condition of a brute . . ." <sup>95</sup>



## IDEALISM VS. MATERIALISM (OR REALISM)

Kant's influential critique of "bad" idealism for denying the existence of the external world points to a perceived conflict between idealism and materialism which goes all the way back to ancient Greece, and which, in modern times, becomes a conflict between idealism and realism. The opposition between idealism on the one hand and materialism, or realism, on the other is confusing and confused. It is unclear how materialism and realism relate to each other. There are different conceptions of the real, hence of realism. Plato is often believed to hold that reality is composed of ideas, hence is not material. From this perspective, realism appears to be a wider, more inclusive category than materialism. Observers further divide about whether materialism and/or realism in fact conflict with idealism, however understood.

Leibniz' single brief reference to Epicurean materialism and Platonic idealism identifies a tension between two very different theoretical approaches. Opinions are divided about the significance of the difference between idealism and materialism. Some, including Marxists and analytic thinkers, regard the difference as crucial, whereas others, including Hegel,<sup>96</sup> view it as simply insignificant, a false problem, not worth spilling ink about, according to Bernard Bosanquet a merely verbal difficulty.<sup>97</sup> Fichte inconsistently depicts materialism (or metaphysical realism) and idealism as incompatible, as true contradictories, but also as only partially incompatible, in arguing for a third position which embraces them both.<sup>98</sup> It is also not clear how to draw the necessary distinctions. There are many suggestions. According to Nelson Goodman, realists think there is only one world and idealists resist this idea, but the difference between them is merely conventional.<sup>99</sup>

Idealism, which in all its many forms always presents an epis-

temological thesis, is often understood as the opposite of realism, which is an ontological doctrine.<sup>100</sup> Claims to know are usually, perhaps always, formulated as claims to know something (real), in short to know reality, which is routinely understood in many different ways. When “realism” and “idealism” are understood as contraries, “realism” is mainly, perhaps exclusively, understood as making good on the traditional metaphysical claim to know the mind-independent external world as it is. This idea is already ingredient in Leibniz’ canonical reference to Platonic idealism and Epicurean materialism as presenting different views of the soul as immaterial or material. Leibniz may have been thinking of Plato’s efforts to prove the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, as distinguished from the Epicurean view that at death the soul merely dissolves. In fact, there is a vast difference between Platonism and Epicurus’ position, which goes well beyond the question of how to understand the soul.

One way to put the point is by noting the difference between the basic Epicurean thesis that the universe consists exclusively of matter and the void, and any form of the matter-spirit dualism. Epicurus follows the atomism invented by Democritus (and Leucippus) in a theory based on immediate experience, which is in many ways the opposite of Platonism. Epicurus features the interdependence of body and soul, so that neither can survive without the other, a stress on pleasure and the good life, and a rejection of much of traditional education. A foreshortened form of Epicureanism, without the characteristic emphasis on pleasure, but stressing the values of the here and now, was ingredient in the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century.

Greek atomism is an early form of ontological materialism. Ontological materialism (as distinguished from economic materialism, or an interest in money) is in general the view that

everything is made of matter. The meaning of the term “matter” is a topic of continuing dispute among philosophers and later physicists. Early Greek cosmological speculation attempted to account for the origin of the cosmos as a series of variations on a very few basic substances, for Thales only water. Since “matter” has been understood in so many different ways, there are many different types of materialism. Greek materialism originates the view that there are only indivisible atoms and empty space. For physical theory, though not necessarily for philosophy, this view was transformed by Einstein’s theory of relativity at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some thinkers, such as Berkeley, who favors immaterialism, claim that matter is a gratuitous assumption, which, since it cannot be perceived, should be abandoned. Others, such as Heidegger, for whom “matter” means “being,” take it to be a central concern, even the single central concern.

The relation between matter and being, hence between materialism and ontology, or ontological metaphysics, is unclear other than that they are not the same. One difference is that matter, hence materialism, relates to things, whereas being, hence ontology (or metaphysics in a traditional sense of the term) concerns what is, or existence. A thing exists, or is an existent, but it is not existence. Since the early Greeks, the topic of materialism in all its forms has been understood as concerning the ultimate constituents of the world. A straight line leads from pre-Socratic cosmological speculation to the atomic theory of matter and current, vastly more complex theories of subatomic particles. Being is the topic of ontology, or as it is also sometimes called metaphysics, which since Aristotle has been understood as concerned with kinds and modes of being. The metaphysical tradition stretches continuously from ancient Greece through medieval scholasticism to Heidegger and other contemporary thinkers.

Ontological metaphysics is now widely rejected, but philosophical materialism is currently very popular. Early in the twentieth century materialism was taken up by the positivists, especially the members of the loosely associated group clustered around Schlick known as the Vienna Circle thinkers. Physicalism, or the doctrine that everything is physical, is a form of materialism. In positivist circles, physicalism led to the empirical criterion of meaning, according to which a claim is meaningful if and only if it can be empirically tested. Extensionalism, a related doctrine, refers to the things which, since they fall under a term, comprise its extension. Behaviorism is closely related to materialism. Thus contemporary behaviorists defend central state physicalism and allied doctrines. According to this view, claims about mental states are really about states of the central nervous system. Proponents argue in various ways that this approach is promising (Paul Feyerabend, Hilary Putnam), or the only possible approach (U. T. Place, J. J. C. Smart, Herbert Feigl). Eliminative materialists (Paul Churchland, Richard Rorty) contend that explanations of human behavior in terms of so-called folk psychology should be abandoned in favor of more sophisticated explanations based on neuroscience.<sup>101</sup>

#### MARXIST REJECTION OF “BOURGEOIS” IDEALISM

Kant, who defends a form of idealism, only rejects “bad” types of idealism allegedly featured by Descartes and Berkeley. Later thinkers, including Marxists and analytic thinkers, often misgeneralize Kant’s criticism in rejecting “idealism” however understood.

The widespread Marxist effort on political grounds to conflate Marx and Marxism tends to obscure important conceptual differences. Marx is more moderate than the Marxists, who

claim to speak in his name in promoting materialism while rejecting idealism. Marxism, which regards “idealism” and “materialism” as exclusive alternatives, often takes “materialism” to mean literally whatever is excluded by “idealism.” This is certainly incompatible with Marx’s position. Marx had a more refined appreciation of materialism, which he studied in detail in his dissertation.<sup>102</sup> He never clearly designates his position as materialism, and he never claims to break with anything more than a “bad” form of idealism, which he unclearly identifies with Hegel.

Important thinkers never simply take over without correction insights, concepts, analyses, or theories formulated by their predecessors. Marx’s relation to Hegel, which has often been studied,<sup>103</sup> resembles *ceteris paribus* Hegel’s relation to Kant. Hegel, who is constantly concerned to interpret, to evaluate, to criticize and to reformulate Kantian doctrines, is strongly, indeed decisively, influenced by the critical philosophy. Marx, who is sharply critical of Hegel, remains generally Hegelian. Despite frequent claims to the contrary, beginning with Engels,<sup>104</sup> there is no reason to believe Marx breaks either with philosophy in general or with German idealism. On any reasonable interpretation, his position belongs to German idealism.<sup>105</sup>

The contrary claim that Marx breaks with idealism (and with philosophy) is a staple of Marxism. This claim is made in various ways, including the assertion that Marx’s theory is science (Althusser),<sup>106</sup> that it is a form of critique (Korsch),<sup>107</sup> that it is materialism and that materialism excludes idealism (Engels),<sup>108</sup> or that it offers a true, as opposed to a mythological, analysis of history (Lukács).<sup>109</sup> Engels, who simply identifies Marxism and materialism (a claim Marx never makes about his own position), detects a basic difference between Marx’s alleged materialism and idealism in general. Engels’ view of Marx’s materialism is based on a single enigmatic passage in Marx’s writings. In

the afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, Marx in passing declares his interest in Hegelian dialectic while remarking unclearly that in Hegel it is inverted. "With him it [i.e., dialectic] is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell."<sup>110</sup>

Marxism has consistently relied on this famous inversion metaphor to argue two related points. First, it characterizes Marx and Marxism as breaking cleanly with Hegel and idealism. Second, it contends that Marx and Marxism solve real philosophical problems, which are raised by, but which cannot be solved within, classical German philosophy.

The Marxist claims of the alleged conceptual inadequacy of Hegel, German idealism, and/or idealism are formulated in simplistic, crude form by Engels, then later in a more sophisticated manner by Lukács. In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, a slim book that was hugely influential for later generations of Marxists, Engels suggests that Marx forges his distinctive form of materialism by inverting Hegel's idealism. Engels' demonstration relies on a description of the so-called basic question of all philosophy, especially modern philosophy, as concerns the relation of thought and being.

Kant's constructivist claim that we can only reliably know what we construct is restated in post-Kantian idealism as the view that knowledge requires an identity of thought and being. Engels' claim is based on a creative transformation of Hegel's view that the goal of philosophy is to demonstrate this identity. Engels transforms this Hegelian goal into supposedly exclusive alternatives representing the opposing perspectives of the proletariat, whose interests are allegedly represented by Marx and Marxism, and of what he and other Marxists often call bourgeois philosophy. According to Engels, who silently relies on the law of excluded middle, materialism and idealism are ex-

haustive but exclusive alternatives, one of which must be true and the other of which must be false.

In his dichotomous analysis, Engels discerns two great camps. Those who assert the primacy of thought, or as Engels also says spirit—the relation between thought and spirit remains unclarified in his writings—are idealists. In relying on spirit as central to idealism, Engels seems to have in mind Hegel (but not, say, Schelling, Fichte, or Kant, who are arguably the main figures in German idealism), as well as Plato, Descartes, Berkeley, and so on. According to Engels, idealists, who typically invert the relation of thought to being, believe that matter emerges from thought. Those, on the contrary, who believe that thought emerges from matter, or that mind is a product of matter (roughly what is now called emergentism), are materialists.

Though Engels' intention is practical, his distinction is theoretical. In practice, sharp, theoretical distinctions refer to ideal types, not to particular theories. In putting the supposed difference so sharply, Engels eliminates any possibility of overlap between idealism and materialism. He further makes it possible to discredit one view as a direct consequence of accepting the other. For Engels, the acid test lies in the practical cognitive potential of the two competing perspectives.

Engels correlates the difference between idealism and materialism to the problem of knowledge. He denies that idealism can correctly grasp the world, which is, however, correctly grasped by materialism. In inverting Hegel's dialectic, Marx (and Engels, since Engels suggests that he and Marx share a common position) gives up what Engels describes as idealist fancy for general laws of motion of the real world, which he also calls "the science of real men and of their historical development,"<sup>111</sup> or in another formulation "the science of the general laws of motion—both of the external world and of human thought . . ."<sup>112</sup> Yet he neither shows that Marx proposes a sci-

ence of real men and their historical development, nor a science of the general laws of motion of the external world and human thought, nor again that Marx's position can fairly be understood as materialism.

Engels' cognitive claim for materialism over idealism depends on the suggested relation of thought and being, or its synonym matter. A very similar view is reformulated by Lukács in more sophisticated fashion and in terms more closely related to the history of philosophy, which he knew well. In making the case for materialism, Engels simply discredits idealism as incapable of knowing its object in virtue of a supposed dependence of idealist thought on a socially distorted context that reduces it to mere ideology. Left unclarified in this argument is why Marxism is not subject to the same or similar constraints. Lukács' contribution consists in a more informed, more academic restatement of Engels' view of the superiority of materialism based on a more informed reading of Kant's critical philosophy.

Lukács' reformulation of Engels' argument is influenced by Lask, who, like Kant, was interested in the limits of human cognition in respect to what he called the problem of irrationality (*Irrationalitätsproblem*).<sup>113</sup> Lask draws attention to the way Kant considers the relation between the human cognitive capacity, or understanding, and its cognitive object in analyzing the limits of human knowledge. Following Lask, Lukács applies Kant's view of the intrinsic limits of human reason to classical German philosophy. According to Lukács, beginning with Kant German idealism is concerned with a problem to which it points, but which, in virtue of its false view of history, it cannot solve, and which is solved by Marx and Marxism because of their true view of history.

Lukács believes that the supposedly unresolved problems of German idealism are solved by Marx and Marxism through



substituting a true view of history for the mythical one in Hegel. In Lukács' version of the argument, Engels' analysis of the so-called watershed problem of the relation of thought and being is replaced by the Kantian problem of the thing in itself in relation to history. According to Lukács, the problem of knowledge of the thing in itself is the central problem running throughout German idealism. This problem, which is formulated by Kant, interests all the later German idealists, including Hegel. German idealism culminates in Hegel's mythological theory of history. In replacing the concept of the absolute by the proletariat as the identical subject-object, Marx solves the problem of the thing in itself, which Lukács regards as the central problem of German idealism.<sup>114</sup>

Engels and Lukács agree that the main problem is to know the thing in itself. They disagree only with respect to the proper way to do this. According to Engels, whose grasp of Kant is obviously inadequate, through "experiment and industry" we bring an end to "the incomprehensible Kantian 'thing in itself.'" <sup>115</sup> Lukács, who famously criticizes Engels' grasp of this crucial Kantian concept, makes nearly the same claim in asserting that only Marxism grasps social reality as it is. In a word, both agree that German idealism is inadequate to know its cognitive object. In a typical passage, Lukács writes: "Of course, the knowledge yielded by the standpoint of the proletariat stands on a higher scientific plane objectively; it does, after all, apply a method that makes possible the solution of problems which the greatest thinkers of the bourgeois era have vainly struggled to find and in its substance, it provides the adequate historical analysis of capitalism, which remains beyond the grasp of bourgeois thinkers."<sup>116</sup>

Though Marxism claims to break with German idealism and philosophy in general, the Marxist criticism of idealism as in principle inadequate for knowledge of the thing in itself relies

on a Kantian argument. Marxism regards the idealist cognitive instrument as unable to provide knowledge of its cognitive object. Since by definition knowledge is limited to experience and the thing in itself cannot be given in experience, hence cannot be known, it follows that Hegel in particular and idealism in general do not fall short in this respect. It further follows, though to show this would take us beyond the limits of the present essay, that in virtue of the status of the thing in itself as lying beyond all cognition of any kind, not only Kant and post-Kantian German idealism but also Marx and Marxism simply cannot succeed in this task. In other words, since there is not and cannot be knowledge of the thing in itself, it is incorrect to suggest that Marx and Marxism go beyond classical German philosophy in providing it.

#### ANALYTIC CRITIQUE OF (BRITISH) IDEALISM

We can end this chapter with some remarks on the analytic critique of idealism, especially Kantian idealism. Marxist and analytic thinkers oppose idealism in different ways. Marxists mainly object to forms of idealism or to idealism in general in favor of materialism, whereas analytic thinkers object to idealism as such on behalf of realism. Marxist thinkers, who insist on the difference in kind between Marx and German idealism, and who are often uneasy about the very possibility of an overlap between Marx and Hegel, mainly refute forms of idealism. Thus Lukács, arguably the strongest Marxist philosopher, is careful not to refute idealism in all its forms, preferring to object to a supposed idealist incapacity to cognize history. Analytic thinkers, who tend to know less about types of idealism, also tend to paint with a broader brush in refuting “idealism” as such without regard either to its various forms or to particular idealist positions. Yet since “idealism” in general does not exist, ana-

lytic criticism of it is mainly directed against a straw man, a nonexistent opponent, a mere foil for a rival view.

Like Marxists, who are committed to materialism, analytic thinkers, who embrace realism, often regard idealism and realism as incompatible, polar opposites, exclusive alternatives which supposedly exhaust the conceptual universe. Analytic thinkers typically attribute to idealists doctrines difficult or even impossible to detect in the texts. There is a pronounced tendency among analytic thinkers to understand idealism as rejecting realism, and realism as the single possible alternative to idealism. It is as if Kant's objection to the supposed denial of the existence of the external world in "bad" idealism had meanwhile been extended to idealism in all its forms, even to "idealism" as such. Thus Michael Devitt, a leading contemporary analytic realist, simply follows R. J. Hirst (who follows Moore) in holding that idealism denies the existence of the external world.<sup>117</sup>

The analytic rejection of idealism is often linked to a commitment to metaphysical realism. The analytic refutation of idealism has remained remarkably steady since the turn of the twentieth century. It seems to be unaffected by the nascent, selective analytic turn (or return) to Hegel in such thinkers as Sellars, Rorty, Brandom, and McDowell. These and other analytic figures interested in Hegel manifest a traditional analytic commitment to metaphysical realism without visible sympathy for idealism of any kind. Though Hegel understood himself and has since always been understood as an idealist, in the analytic turn (or return) to Hegel everything is happening as if it were paradoxically possible to be interested in, or even committed to Hegel, but opposed to all forms of idealism.

There is a difference between analytic philosophy and the version of it that emerged in England in the writings of Russell and Moore. If Frege is an analytic philosopher, then analytic philosophy is not as such critical of idealism. Though Frege,

who is widely regarded as the inventor of modern analytic philosophy, was critical in the 1890s of Husserl's psychologism, it would be incorrect to situate him within the analytic revolt against idealism, which only arose after 1900.<sup>118</sup> It has even been argued, in part because he published in a Kantian journal, that he may have considered himself to be an idealist.<sup>119</sup> Unlike, say, Moore, for whom the rejection of idealism is crucial for his own thought, Frege's sparse remarks on idealism neither define his position nor add up to a sustained critique of this epistemological approach. This changes with the emergence of analytic philosophy in England in Russell and Moore. After a short period when as undergraduates at Cambridge both Russell and Moore were well disposed toward idealism, and may even have considered themselves to be idealists, both broke with idealism in the course of developing positions they understood as opposed to any of its forms, hence to idealism in general.

Russell, who disliked idealism and poked fun at its proponents, said nothing memorable about it. The canonical English-language critique of idealism, clearly formulated by G. E. Moore in 1903, supposes a commitment to metaphysical realism still widely followed by analytic thinkers, including those now turning to Hegel,<sup>120</sup> while extending the limits of cognition. In claiming that idealism of all kinds denies the existence of the external world, Moore, on the contrary, claims to know the world as it is. Following Moore, whose rejection of idealism has long enjoyed canonical status, analytic thinkers routinely oppose idealism.

In "The Refutation of Idealism," Moore influentially criticizes "idealism" for allegedly rejecting the existence of the external world. This criticism, which influenced the analytic turn away from "idealism," remains strongly influential in the analytic debate roughly a century later. Analytic thinkers more often accept the conclusion of Moore's paper than examine the

reasoning behind it or even read it. It is significant that at a time when selected analytic figures (Sellars, Brandom, McDowell) are coming back toward Hegel, to the best of my knowledge none of them has yet ventured a kind word about “idealism.”

Moore, a commonsense philosopher, follows Thomas Reid, the inventor of commonsensism. In the eighteenth century, in arguing against dualism from Plato to the present, Reid claimed we have direct, immediate knowledge of the existence of things.<sup>121</sup> Reid accused Berkeley and Hume, who, from this perspective, can be reclassified as idealists, of denying the existence of the external world. In his famous article, Moore reformulates Reid’s complaint in generalizing it to idealism as such. If this description were accurate, then it would apply to all forms of idealism in all times and places. In this case, all idealists would not only answer to the term but further share something in common, a single doctrinal commitment. The double advantage of this approach to idealism is obvious. It allows its identification wherever it occurs in terms of the supposed commitment to a single doctrine, and it further enables the formulation of a general critique which applies across the board to each and all forms of idealism, and to “idealism” as such.

Moore has long enjoyed a reputation as a master of the English language, which he employs with simplicity and precision. Yet numerous aspects of Moore’s influential critique, and hence of the staunch later analytic rejection of “idealism,” remain obscure, difficult to grasp, hence hard to evaluate. One difficulty is whether Moore’s critique commits him to direct knowledge as in Reid, or only to indirect knowledge as in Locke. These views are different and incompatible. It is only in the belief that there is no direct knowledge of things that arguments are formulated to suggest indirect, representational accounts. At different times, Moore seems to endorse both views. In his attack on idealism, he appears to be suggesting, without so much as

anything resembling an argument or even an acknowledgement of the difficulty of the claim, that there just is direct knowledge of items in the external world. In other places, Moore, like Russell, supported the sense datum theory, or the rival idea that one does not directly perceive external objects but rather perceives merely subjective entities, variously described as *sensa* or sense data, which allegedly have the properties of such objects.<sup>122</sup> These two approaches are different and incompatible. The former approach, which Moore followed in his influential attack on idealism, commits him to naïve realism, and the latter commits him to representational realism. In both cases, his claim seems to be that there are unassailable immediate commonsense items of knowledge, which are self-justifying and which cannot be denied. Another, key difficulty is the precise target of Moore's attack. It is unclear if it is supposed to be directed against "idealism," British idealism, Bradley, Berkeley, or maybe only the Platonist A. E. Taylor.

Moore, who knew Kant well—he wrote his dissertation on Kant's ethics—loosely follows Kant in his attack on idealism. Yet the aims of Kant and Moore are very different. Kant, who was committed to the success of idealism, was only concerned to refute forms of "bad" idealism. But Moore, who refuses Kant's implicit distinction between "bad" and "good" idealism—for Moore all forms of idealism are "bad"—is concerned to overcome all idealism of whatever kind. Kant and Moore agree on the need to refute idealist theories, which supposedly place in doubt or even deny the existence of the external world, while disagreeing about common sense, which Moore favored at the time he wrote his paper and Kant rejected.<sup>123</sup> One implication of Moore's attack on "idealism" is that Kant, perhaps because he restricted his refutation only to "bad" forms, failed to refute "idealism,"<sup>124</sup> which now requires another, better refutation.

Moore's controversial refutation rests on five distinct, but

doubtful assumptions. First, he apparently assumes, but does not show, that Kant fails to refute “idealism.” If in fact Moore takes Kant to be trying, but miserably failing, to refute idealism in general, then his own discussion rests on a misreading of the author of the critical philosophy. There is simply no evidence that this way of reading Kant is correct. There is strong counter-evidence, since Kant was himself committed to transcendental idealism, hence considered himself to be an idealist. Second, Moore assumes there is idealism in general. Yet there are at most forms of idealism, which are represented by different idealists. Idealism in general no more exists than does Locke’s general triangle. This is a straw man constructed for purposes of refutation by analytic enemies of particular idealists in the struggle for the soul of philosophy in England. Third, Moore supposes that idealism in all its forms has a common conceptual commitment. Yet, unlike organized religion, idealism has no credo, hence no single thesis, position, doctrinal commitment or series of claims to which idealists of all types subscribe. The existence of a common set of idealist doctrines, to which thinkers as diverse as Plato, Descartes, and Kant are committed, has simply never been shown. Idealists, or those classified as idealists, are a remarkably diverse bunch.

Fourth, Moore believes that all idealists of whatever kind are committed to denying the existence of the external world. Yet it is simply false, a mere “invention” by Moore, to allege that idealism, or types of idealism, deny the existence of the external world. Descartes’ claim about the possible inability to know external objects, whose existence he seems never to have doubted, would be misunderstood as the very different claim that the external world does not exist. Descartes, who famously invokes against himself the conceptual device of an evil demon, raises the strongest possible objection to his position in suggesting that any claim about the world and the world itself might

conceivably be a mere illusion or delusion. But he does not endorse this view as anything other than a mere conceptual possibility, in which he never claims to believe. Neither Descartes nor any other idealist affirms that the external world does not exist or that its existence is doubtful. There is no single example, and Moore gives none, of any idealist, or any alleged idealist, who denies, or can plausibly be thought to deny, the existence of the external world. Even Berkeley, who is sometimes mistakenly held to deny the existence of the external world, denies no more than mistaken philosophical views that, in his opinion, run against common sense. Moore, who is critical of Berkeley, perhaps unwittingly shares with him the concern to defend common sense, if necessary against the philosophers.

Fifth, Moore is convinced that the supposed idealist thesis of the nonexistence of the external world can be defeated through simple, commonsense assertions, which count as unimpeachable examples of immediate knowledge. Kant, who denies direct knowledge, presents a variation on the well-known causal view of perception. Moore's position in this article presupposes a direct grasp without intermediaries, such as ideas or representations, of mind-independent objects. He characteristically believes that we know certain simple propositions to be true, such as the famous claim contained in the simple statement, "I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, 'Here is one hand, and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, 'And here is another.'" <sup>125</sup>

Moore takes this claim as consistent with common sense, which is, he assumes, simply correct. This claim, which is less obvious than it seems, is often contested. Reid, on whom Moore tacitly relies, draws a distinction between sensations and object in contending that the former are directly given, but the latter cannot be inferred on this basis. In this respect, Moore's



effort to radicalize Reid's commonsensism to prove the existence of the external world simply fails. As Wittgenstein shows in *On Certainty*, even apparently commonsense propositions are always indexed to a frame of reference in terms of which they are true or false. Hence the very idea of an immediate item of knowledge, which supposedly refutes idealism, cannot be made out. Moore himself later came to a similar conclusion in turning, in part under Russell's influence, toward a less simplistic view.

Although very weak, unsatisfactory as a refutation of idealism in general and arguably as a refutation of any single one of its main forms, Moore's early but influential analytic rejection of idealism has had a series of important consequences. One, as noted, is an unwavering and continuing analytic turn away from idealism of all kinds. A second, just mentioned, is a nascent, but confused analytic commitment to Hegel while still rejecting idealism of any form. A third is a steady focus on metaphysical realism without attention to the reasons for which Kant and his German idealist successors rejected it. Fourth, Moore's rejection of idealism exercises a growing influence on analytic historians of philosophy and of ideas, who defend an ideal of objective knowledge while increasingly rejecting the supposed subjectivism of later German idealist philosophy, particularly Hegel's alleged subjectivism.<sup>126</sup> The irony here is that this criticism is a variant of the same charge Hegel brought against Kant and Fichte, that of featuring supposedly subjective, not objective idealism, hence for threatening the very possibility of objective knowledge.

#### ANALYTIC CRITIQUE OF KANT'S IDEALISM

Kantian idealism and its relation to Kant's overall position are both controversial. Kant indicates from time to time that he

considers his position to be both transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Though he refutes “bad” idealism, he describes his own position as transcendental idealism.<sup>127</sup> There seems to be a good deal of confusion about the meaning of Kant’s “transcendental idealism,” and hence about the specific sense in which he is an idealist, or defends a form of idealism, which has long posed difficulties to his readers. Kant’s post-Kantian German idealist readers were mainly concerned with specific arguments as part of the general effort to carry further and complete the Copernican revolution. Under the influence of Moore’s “Refutation of Idealism,” Kant’s analytic readers often concentrate on the link between the critical philosophy and idealism as if simply to profess some form of idealism were itself problematic.

Kant forges a solid link between idealism and transcendental philosophy in his transcendental idealism. In general, post-Kantian idealists feature forms of idealism while dropping Kant’s transcendental approach. The post-Kantian German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Marx) follow Fichte’s lead in dropping the transcendental approach while insisting on idealism that, as a result, becomes a posteriori. Schopenhauer reinterprets transcendental idealism psychologically, suggesting it concerns, not eternal truths, but rules situated in the mind for the perception of phenomena.<sup>128</sup>

There are few, if any, contemporary defenders of transcendental idealism and only infrequent efforts, even among Kant scholars, to study the transcendental aspect of Kantian idealism. Ameriks has recently distinguished between “nonspecific” and “specific” forms of transcendental idealism in locating Kantian idealism in his theory of sensibility.<sup>129</sup> The difficulty in this suggestion is that it presumes we agree about “idealism” and “transcendental idealism,” whose precise meanings remain controversial.

Another tack, distantly following Moore, is simply to reject idealism as even potentially viable. This approach is developed in recent analytic interpretation of both Kant and Hegel. Analytic Kant interpretation often features an approach to Kant's critical philosophy as if, despite what he may have himself believed about the critical philosophy, his interest in idealism were separable from his overall position. The logic of this approach seems to be that idealism is indefensible, and, if Kant were an idealist, or in part an idealist, then his position could not be defended. With that in mind, a number of recent observers read the critical philosophy without idealism, hence against Kant, suggesting two points: (1) Kant's transcendental idealism is indefensible and (2) Kant's position is viable apart from whatever investment he may personally have in idealism. The paradoxical result is a nonidealist and even anti-idealist reading of Kant.

Following Allison, who helps to bring this approach into focus and analyze it, I will call the view that Kant's overall position can and should be read without his characteristic view of transcendental idealism the separability thesis.<sup>130</sup> Allison usefully links the separability thesis, which he expounds and criticizes, to a causal, or metaphysical, approach to the relation of appearances to things in themselves. Allison, who has the Feder-Garve review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in mind, regards the metaphysical thesis as essentially Berkeleyn. On this view, representations are purely mental phenomena, which result from the mind's being "affected" by unknowable things in themselves. This way of reading Kant goes back to his contemporaries.<sup>131</sup> It was influentially revived in the middle of the last century by Strawson, a leading analytic philosopher who was arguably the most influential figure in the analytic rehabilitation of Kant. In Strawson's interpretation, Kant appears as an early analytic philosopher, someone who successfully antici-

pated certain main analytic concerns, but runs afoul of others, hence needs to be corrected.

In an influential book, Strawson provides a rational reconstruction of the critical philosophy,<sup>132</sup> which is based as much on analytic philosophy as on Kant.<sup>133</sup> His purpose, as he later indicated, was to preserve what could still be saved in Kant while rejecting what he considered to be false.<sup>134</sup> Strawson stresses a metaphysical realist reading of Kant, while downplaying, in fact simply rejecting, his idealism. He gives precedence to the reality of the mind-independent real. On this basis, he calls attention to the paradox that according to Kant we can know nothing about things in themselves, but if there is knowledge we are aware of mind-independent objects.<sup>135</sup> This leads him to the conclusion that in giving up Kant's transcendental idealism we lose absolutely nothing.<sup>136</sup> Yet if, as Kant thinks, transcendental idealism is an integral part of the critical philosophy, to reject his idealism is in effect also to reject his position.

Strawson's metaphysical realist, anti-idealist approach to Kant approaches the critical philosophy through main tenets of analytic philosophy. This steady analytic commitment influences analytic readings of Kant, which downplay the possibility as well as the importance of making sense of transcendental idealism, or of idealism in general. According to Allison, Strawson is following H. H. Prichard's influential view that Kant conflates two claims: we only know things as they appear to us, and we know only appearances.<sup>137</sup> The difference seems to lie in whether things that appear to us are in space and time, or whether only appearances are in space and time. Kant seems to hold that we are affected by things in themselves, which are not in space and time, whereas analytic thinkers like Prichard and Strawson apparently believe that things that affect us and that we know are in space and time.

Strawson's critique of Kantian idealism is dogmatic in the specifically Kantian sense of the term. In effect, he does not so much criticize Kant's position on its own terms as reject it as the result of rejecting transcendental idealism. Strawson rejects Kant's view in favor of the standard Cartesian theory of perception widely favored in analytic philosophy, with which Kant was familiar but which he rejects. According to Strawson, it only makes sense to claim that we are affected by objects in space and time, and it makes no sense to maintain we are affected by objects that are not in space and time.

Strawson is an original philosopher, the author of a descriptive theory of metaphysics,<sup>138</sup> as well as a Kant interpreter, who is interested more in those features of Kant's position that he believes can still be defended than in correctly interpreting that position.<sup>139</sup> Strawson's version of the separability thesis is further defended by some Kant specialists, who are more concerned than he is to grasp Kant's position correctly and less concerned to defend rival views, including Paul Guyer and Rae Langton.

Guyer accepts some of Kant's basic claims, but rejects others.<sup>140</sup> He agrees with Kant's arguments for a transcendental theory of experience in the "Analogies of Experience" and the "Refutation of Idealism," but like many other readers of Kant he refutes the claim for things in themselves. According to Guyer, it is possible to enter into Kant's position, understood as a transcendental theory of experience (and knowledge), without things in themselves since, on his view, none of Kant's arguments for the nonspatial and nontemporal character of things in themselves is valid.<sup>141</sup> Guyer believes Kant's transcendental idealism is dogmatic since he claims to know that things in themselves are not as we represent them to be.<sup>142</sup> For instance, since our representations of things in themselves are temporal,

Kant's transcendental idealism points to the thesis that things in themselves cannot be temporal.<sup>143</sup>

Guyer acknowledges, but dismisses Kant's transcendental idealism. Langton, who like Guyer, dismisses Kantian idealism,<sup>144</sup> further appears to deny there is such a theory. She simply reads Kant without it,<sup>145</sup> depicting him as favoring a causal theory of knowledge as well as scientific realism, that is, the scientific form of metaphysical realism.<sup>146</sup> Yet unlike Guyer, she takes the Kantian distinction between appearances and things in themselves seriously. She interprets this distinction as pointing to the metaphysical denial of the reducibility of relations. According to Langton, the distinction between things in themselves and phenomena concerns the differences between intrinsic properties and relational properties of substances. As Langton reads Kant, he is committed to the idea that phenomena consist of relations, or forces, as well as to the further idea, which she associates with epistemic humility, that we can have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of substances. In Langton's interpretation, Kant appears as a precritical rationalist, even as a strong Cartesian, whose position turns on making sense of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. According to Langton, Kant's denial of reductionism is directed against Leibniz. She favors Strawson's thesis that knowledge depends on being affected by a mind-independent cognitive object,<sup>147</sup> whose intrinsic properties cannot be cognized. According to Langton, we can without contradiction assert the existence of substances whose intrinsic properties we cannot know.<sup>148</sup>

Other Kant specialists are uneasy about the effort to interpret Kant without idealism. Allison's main goal is to interpret and defend transcendental idealism against Strawson and those, such as Guyer<sup>149</sup> and Langton,<sup>150</sup> who follow his lead in sepa-

rating it from Kant's overall position. Strawson, perhaps Guyer, certainly Langton, and other analytic students of Kant opposed to his transcendental idealism often rely on a prior commitment to the ordinary world of experience. From this angle of vision, and stated in Kantian language, the problem of knowledge consists in explaining representation, hence in accepting representationalism. This kind of approach loads the dice against Kant by criticizing his position on the basis of another position he is aware of and if not initially, at least later, rejects.

Allison denies the separability thesis, hence denies Kant's transcendental idealism can be separated from his overall position. In opposing metaphysical interpretations and criticisms of the critical philosophy, he holds that Kant proposes an epistemological theory of human cognition based on a so-called epistemic condition, that is, a condition necessary for representing objects. He interprets an epistemic condition as relating to objects, as possessing objective reality—for Allison these terms are synonymous—and as neither psychological nor ontological.<sup>151</sup> Epistemic conditions concern the objectivity of our subjective representations, as distinguished from things in themselves. According to Allison, an epistemic condition relates or relativizes objects to the conditions of human cognition as well as the conditions of the representation of objects.<sup>152</sup> Allison's basic assumption is that a necessary condition of cognition is that one or more objects be given to the mind through sensible intuition, but that sensible intuition is insufficient to yield cognition. In other words, the contents of sense intuition are not ordered, but capable of being ordered, and are in fact worked up by the mind in yielding cognition.<sup>153</sup>

There is a clear, indeed fundamental difference of opinion about the importance of Kantian idealism between Guyer and Allison. Guyer believes that Kant's view of transcendental idealism is trivial.<sup>154</sup> Allison describes the same view, which he

interprets differently, as a revolutionary theory about epistemic conditions.<sup>155</sup> His epistemic reading of Kant is correct against all forms of the metaphysical interpretation of Kant, which inconsistently reads the critical philosophy in terms of a prior commitment to representation on the basis of a spatiotemporal, mind-independent world, a commitment Kant rejects. Yet he goes too far in failing to note the inconsistency between Kant's dual commitment to a solution to the problem of representation and the problem of experience and knowledge of objects. If Kant's only aim were to provide a theory of representation, then his position would merely be a variation on the theme of the new way of ideas that unites a large group of disparate thinkers, including rationalists, British empiricists, and contemporary analytic philosophers around a causal theory of perception on the assumption of the mind-independent external world as a given.

I believe this interpretation of Kant's position is incorrect for two reasons. First, neither Kant nor anyone else has ever demonstrated that representations represent. If Kant could demonstrate this point, then he would be able to answer the question raised in the famous Herz letter about the relation between representations and objects. Yet in Kantian language, there is no way to demonstrate, and Kant does not demonstrate, the relation of representations to what is represented. In fact, even the effort to investigate this line of argument commits Kant to the dogmatic insistence on the mind-independent external world as a condition of its possible representation. Second, Kant's Copernican revolution is not compatible, but rather incompatible, with his representationalism.

When properly interpreted, his revolutionary constructivist thesis abandons two points central to Allison's account while making the case for transcendental idealism. On the one hand, it gives up even tacit reference to the mind-independent ex-



ternal world, a dogmatic metaphysical thesis that Kant cannot consistently hold on any epistemic reading of the critical philosophy, including Allison's. On the other hand, and as a result of abandoning metaphysical realism, Kant gives up any residual velleity to represent the mind-independent real as it is. It follows that transcendental idealism is not an epistemic thesis about how to make out a representational approach to knowledge, but rather a very different, incompatible thesis about the conditions of knowledge that do not depend on representation, nor on the mind-independent external world, but rather depend on the revolutionary insight that a necessary condition of knowledge is that we in some sense construct what we know.

## 4

# Idealism, Constructivism, and Knowledge

“Idealism” is often misrepresented by its critics as centering on a single, monolithic claim about the existence of the external world. It is better understood as a series of approaches to knowledge related more in name than in specific epistemological doctrine. Types of idealist epistemology can be differentiated with respect to incompatible forms of realism. Metaphysical realism, we have repeatedly noted, is a claim to know the way the world is, more precisely to know the mind-independent world as it is, whereas empirical realism is a claim to know no more than what is given in experience. The three main forms of idealism (Platonic idealism, the new way of ideas, German idealism) propose, respectively, claims to (1) direct, or immediate knowledge of the way the world is; (2) indirect, or mediated knowledge of the way the world is; and, finally, (3) knowledge of no more than the empirical world as it is given in experience without further reference to or claims about the mind-independent world. Platonism, or the old way of ideas, which takes “ideas” to mean reality, claims that under appropriate conditions there is direct, unmediated knowledge of mind-independent external reality as it is. The new way of ideas introduces an idea, or representation, as the conceptual mediating link between subject and object, knower and known, claiming that to know is to know an idea, or representation, that stands in for and provides a reliable indication of the mind-independent world as it is. In their respective claims to know ideas that are reality (the old way of

ideas) or again that provide reliable knowledge of it (the new way of ideas), both the old and the new way of ideas share a commitment to metaphysical realism. Constructivism, which is an alternative to approaches to knowledge based on metaphysical realism, is the epistemological view that the subject knows only what it constructs, which is limited to the empirically real, as a condition of knowledge.

### KANT AND IDEALISM

These three different forms of idealism cannot be reduced to a single common denominator, a shared doctrinal commitment, or even a family resemblance. If there is a link, then it lies in a dialectical reaction of later thinkers to earlier positions in the context of the ongoing search for a solution to the problem of knowledge.

Kant provides an obvious connection between these three very different forms of idealism. His link to Platonism, which is not often studied in detail, runs surprisingly deep. Kant's famous reference to the possibility of knowing an author better than he knows himself alerts us to the importance of Plato for the critical philosophy in a passage on the comparative advantage of Plato over Aristotle. For Kant, Aristotle's categories are mere keys to possible experience, rooted in the understanding, but, since they are borrowed from experience, not relevant for reliable knowledge as Kant understands it. On the contrary, Plato's ideas, which are basic images of things, are independent of the mind. According to Kant, Plato is helpful in two ways. He is aware that the capacity for knowledge requires more than merely welding together pure appearances through the synthetic unity of experience. He also understands that our reason is naturally attracted to objects congruent with, but beyond, possible experience, and which are not mere fancies, but have

their reality, such as the practical virtues. Yet for Kant, Plato falls short on two counts. He fails to deduce the ideas, which he explains through a mystical conception of recollection. And he overextends his conception of ideas in speculatively applying it not only in the practical realm, for instance in ethical virtues, where it is appropriate, but also in mathematics, where it is inappropriate.

Kant, who accuses Plato of hypostasizing ideas, hence of exaggeration, suggests the utility of a less extreme reading of the theory, closer to the nature of things. It is not far-fetched to see Kant's own goal as a modified form of Plato's. Kant, who agrees that knowledge cannot be based on items drawn from experience, follows the Platonic view of ideas as providing an indispensable, a priori aspect of knowledge. He further agrees that rules for practical action cannot be drawn from experience, while insisting on the importance of a nonmystical deduction. Kantian categories are a variant form of Platonic ideas, which are appropriately deduced and internalized within the mind while avoiding Platonic conceptual excess by limiting them to a finite number.

Kant's ontological critique of material idealism in Descartes and Berkeley, and his further commitment to epistemological representationalism, authorize a description of the new way of ideas as a form of idealism. The link between Kant and those committed to the new way of ideas follows from a shared effort to make out some form of the representational approach to knowledge. It has already been pointed out that all known forms of representationalism turn on the relation between the representation, or idea of the object, and the mind-independent object. The new way of ideas differs from the old way in denying that ideas are themselves reality, which they are alleged to stand in for, or again to represent. This view is variously formulated by Descartes, the English empiricists, and Kant, all of whom agree

that the mind is brought in touch with reality through mental representations which relate to things outside it. The difference between various representationalist thinkers lies in the understanding of the relation of the representation to the way the mind-independent world really is on the basis of a causal view of perception. The causal view of perception is a staple of modern philosophy. For Descartes, this requires a reverse inference from ideas in the mind, thought of as the effect, to the world, or to objects in the world, thought of as their cause; for Locke, there is the causal relation between primary ideas, which are caused by the world, and, since they cannot be false, must be true; and for Kant there is the relation (if it could be shown) of representations to mind-independent objects, which are the effects of the way the mind is affected by “external” objects.

Kant’s further link to constructivism, the third form of epistemological idealism, which many analytic observers either leave to one side or refute, is clear. His famous Copernican revolution in philosophy turns on the deep, but obscure insight that reason knows only what it produces according to its own plan. Kant, who regards this insight as central to the successful practice of modern science, generalizes it as the basis of his theory of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Later German idealism takes Kant’s critical philosophy as an unfinished project, which it strives to complete through working out his constructivist insight.

#### EXCURSUS ON POST-KANTIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM AND IDEALISM: HUSSERL AND CARNAP

It has already been noted that Kant, more than any other modern thinker, puts the difficult problem of how to make sense of constructivism on the epistemological agenda. Since Kant’s influence is huge, it is not surprising that an effort to resolve

this problem constitutes a main, but often overlooked concern in the writings of thinkers influenced by Kant. These include all the main participants in post-Kantian German idealism as well as others influenced by Kant, who may also defend various forms of idealism.

Husserl and Carnap are two of the more important chronological post-Kantians who were also influenced by Kant. Though in many ways very different, Husserl and Carnap overlap in three important ways. One, as noted, is their relation to Kant. Husserl's initial breakthrough to phenomenology occurs in *Logical Investigations* (*Logische Untersuchungen*, 1901) where Kant's imprint is clearly present, notably in the long polemic against psychologism, which is the main theme of the first volume, and in the conception of philosophy as science, which is arguably the central theme running throughout all of Husserl's later writings. Carnap shares with the other Vienna Circle thinkers a typical analytic form of Kantianism, consisting in the rejection of synthetic a priori judgments<sup>1</sup> combined with emphasis on analysis and what could be called scientific empiricism, in his case the so-called protocols later rejected after Neurath's critique.<sup>2</sup> A second similarity between Husserl and Carnap consists in their respective links to idealism. A third point of convergence lies in their concern with an ahistorical form of epistemological constructivism emerging out of Kant.

Husserl's idealism, which remains controversial, is one of the many hermeneutical mysteries in his position. The tension which opposes Husserl and Heidegger with respect to "phenomenology" further extends to their understanding of its relation to Kantian idealism. Husserl, who began in mathematics before moving to philosophy, was most interested in Kant at the beginning and again at the end of his phenomenological period, and later interested in idealism, though not specifically in Kantian idealism. Early in his phenomenological period,

Husserl was less interested in Kant's idealism than in other aspects of Kant's position. In his initial breakthrough to phenomenology in the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl stresses the Kantian conception of rigorously systematic philosophy while, and in reaction to Frege, strongly following Kant's separation between psychology and logic. He briefly discusses idealism in the context of the dispute between psychological and objective approaches to logic.<sup>3</sup> Far more interesting is his remark in passing, which anticipates the course his thought will later take, that, as he puts it, only idealism can provide a "self-consistent theory of knowledge."<sup>4</sup> Later, after he discovered the reduction in 1911, he became more interested in idealism, which he interpreted as opposed to Berkeley's position beginning with *Ideas I* (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie*, 1913). Husserl, who increasingly interpreted his phenomenology in connection with Descartes, seems to have understood his idealism not in a Kantian but rather in an idiosyncratic Cartesian sense, hence understood transcendental phenomenology as neo-Cartesianism. The roots of Husserl's idealism, though not under that name, go back to his early phenomenological writings. In the *Logical Investigations*, he treats idealism as a mere psychologistic prejudice.<sup>5</sup> Later, beginning with *Ideas I*, he began to understand phenomenology as idealism.<sup>6</sup> Starting with *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (*Formale und transzendente Logik*, 1929), that is, after Heidegger brought out *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927), he began to characterize his own position as transcendental idealism that successfully avoided the psychologism characteristic of "bad idealism" such as Berkeley's or Hume's.<sup>7</sup> In his last, unfinished work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (*Die Krise der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, 1954), Husserl sketches a transcendental analysis of the life world (*Lebenswelt*), which

was, he claims, an unexamined presupposition in Kant's critical philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Husserl's explicit move toward idealism dismayed some of his followers, such as Roman Ingarden, the Polish phenomenologist, who apparently thought Husserl was abandoning realism for idealism.<sup>9</sup>

In *Ideas I* and later writings, Husserl began to claim that phenomenology depends on bracketing, or putting into parentheses, the data of consciousness in order to suspend all preconceptions, especially those drawn from the "naturalistic" standpoint which assumes the existence of the life world. He studies the pure given of consciousness on the assumption that consciousness does not exist apart from its contents, for which, under the influence of Brentano, he uses the term "intentionality," or roughly directedness toward (objects). Husserl later took on a supposedly idealist thesis that objects exist outside consciousness, which provoked controversy among his followers.

Some of his readers, such as Eugen Fink, detect a consistent evolution of transcendental idealism from the work published in *Ideas I* onward, which others, for instance Ingarden, reject. Ingarden and Husserlian disciples point out that there are many passages in *Ideas I* which seem to argue directly against idealism. Ingarden argued that Husserl originally espoused a realist standpoint but later abandoned it. Husserl, who disagreed with Ingarden, believed that his own version of transcendental idealism had advanced altogether beyond ordinary idealism, beyond realism, and beyond the very distinction between them. He denied that he ever had held a realist position: ". . . now as ever I hold every form of current philosophical realism to be in principle absurd, as no less every idealism to which in its own arguments that realism stands contrasted, and which in fact it refutes. . . . It follows, therefore, that it [i.e., transcendental-phenomenological Idealism] is a piece of pure self-reflexion revealing original self-evident facts; and, more-



over, when it exhibits in these facts (though incompletely) the outlines of Idealism, it is as far as can be from being one of the usual balancings between Idealism and Realism, and cannot be affected by the arguments involved in any of their objections.”<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, Husserl agrees with those who read his earlier phenomenological writings in the light of the transcendental idealism he only later developed. Like Kant, who rejected his own early work as dogmatic, Husserl argues that his own early work is not fully scientific, not worthy of the name phenomenology. In *Cartesian Meditations* (*Cartesianische Meditationen*, 1929), Husserl claims that “Phenomenology is *eo ipso* ‘transcendental idealism’ . . .”<sup>11</sup> In an important passage, he writes: “We have here a transcendental idealism that *is* nothing more than . . . an explication of my ego as subject of every possible cognition, and indeed [explication of it] with respect to every sense of what exists. . . . This idealism . . . is *sense-explication* carried out as regards every type of existent ever conceivable by me, the ego . . .”<sup>12</sup>

Husserl sees his turn to idealism as deepening and transforming his original form of phenomenology. Carnap, who, so far as I know, never claims to be an idealist, is regarded by some observers as exhibiting idealist tendencies that, from their perspective, supposedly weaken his position. In the period around Carnap’s *Logical Structure of the World* (*Der Logische Aufbau der Welt*, 1929), Coffa discerns two forms of idealism in Carnap’s position: scientific idealism, which differs from standard idealism only in the bias toward science; and semantic idealism, which preserves everything of value in traditional idealism while dropping its indefensible ontological implications.<sup>13</sup>

In Husserl and Carnap, we have two extremely labile positions which do not simply develop and deepen but rather change radically in the course of their development. In examining their views of constructivism, I will be concentrating on

an early text in which Husserl formulates his difficult conception of constitution and on the phase in the development of Carnap's position in which he turns to what he calls construction. Husserlian constitution is a recurrent, but difficult concept in his writings from the time of his turn to transcendental phenomenology until the end of his career. Once he began to wrestle with the idea of constructing or constituting the cognitive object, Husserl continued to focus intermittently on this theme in all his further writings. For Carnap, on the contrary, the turn to construction is confined to a single transitory episode in the development of his position, which, to the best of my knowledge, does not recur in his later writings.

Husserl works out his theory of constitution in a long series of writings, including the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (*Philosophie der Arithmetik: Philosophische und logische Untersuchungen*, 1891), *Ideas I*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and in two posthumously published books, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* and *Experience and Judgment* (*Erfahrung und Urteil: Untersuchungen zu der Genealogie der Logik*, 1948). A typical statement occurs in *Ideas I*, where he contends, in refuting subjective idealism, that all reality exists through the dispensing of meaning.<sup>14</sup> Husserl, who considers the subject, understood as consciousness, as self-contained and absolute, hence as dependent on nothing, seems to be saying that the spatiotemporal world only is for a subject as what is intended.<sup>15</sup> If that is correct, then for Husserl there is a mind-independent external world with which we come into contact and which we know insofar as it is constituted in our consciousness through the intention, or way in which consciousness is directed toward its object.

This relatively simple point seems to have been swallowed up in the very large Husserlian secondary literature. All observers agree that a conception of constitution is close to the heart of Husserl's position, but there is little agreement on how

he understands it. According to Spiegelberg, who indicates that Husserl uses the verbal form of the term both with and without a reflexive pronoun, Husserl never fixes on a single meaning of “constitution.”<sup>16</sup> For Heidegger, “constitution” does not mean producing or making, but rather letting something be seen.<sup>17</sup> Moran points to different claims in various Husserlian texts, including the Kantian idea that objects for consciousness are “built up” through a combination of the contents of sensory intuition and the application of categories stressed in *Cartesian Meditations*.<sup>18</sup> Welton claims that constitutive phenomenology “schematizes the structural formations making phenomenal fields possible according to transcendental *space*.”<sup>19</sup> Mohanty suggests that constitution is the twofold process of the intentional act consisting in the constitution of a noematic sense and then, on that basis, the overlapping noemata of objects.<sup>20</sup> This latter suggestion can be paraphrased as the idea that mind-independent objects only become objects for us through the progressive elaboration of an intention, or directedness towards (something). In a word, for Husserl constitution and intentionality are correlative concepts, since what is intended is constituted by us,<sup>21</sup> and Husserl’s theory of constitution is an account of the constitution, or construction, of the intentional object.

Carnap’s view of constitution, which, as noted, resembles Husserl’s—one reason may be that Carnap attended some of Husserl’s lectures and was aware of his work—can be understood in the context of his initial effort to provide a direct link between empirical experience and modern science through the concept of protocol. His later defeat at the hands of Neurath occurred after the publication of the *Aufbau* in which he described his view of construction.

In the *Aufbau*, Carnap’s project belongs to the phase of logical empiricism, which later leads to physicalism, as part of his effort to work out “the rational reconstruction of the concepts

that refer to the immediately given.”<sup>22</sup> The *Aufbau* presents a so-called constructional system of objects or concepts, where the term “object” is taken in the widest possible sense. Carnap’s intention here is to construct a total system, already suggested by Kant as the criterion of science.<sup>23</sup> By following the logicist example of *Principia Mathematica*, Carnap proposes to derive all concepts from no more than a “few fundamental concepts.”<sup>24</sup> His intention is to apply a theory of relations to problems of pure theory, more precisely, “to the task of analyzing reality.”<sup>25</sup> As in his theory of protocols, so here Carnap is concerned to substitute logical constructions for sense data. In his distinction between concepts as objects and objects falling under concepts, Carnap points to the difference between idealism and realism, for instance the Marburg neo-Kantian view that thinking “creates” objects, and the realist view that thinking merely “apprehends,” or grasps, them. According to Carnap, who suggests that objects are neither created nor apprehended, but rather constructed, the conception of construction is neutral with respect to this difference.

Carnap, who believes that metaphysical problems are meaningless,<sup>26</sup> intends to stake out a metaphysically neutral position by avoiding any choice between apprehension and construction, or metaphysical (or scientific) realism and idealism. Construction and reduction are correlative concepts. In working out a theoretical way to reduce reality to the empirically given, he suggests a model in which, on the basis of what is directly given to mind, the observer can produce a logical construction, that is, a construction which is logically equivalent to, hence can stand in for, or replace, inferred but unobserved (and in principle unobservable) entities.<sup>27</sup> Through reduction, statements about one object, say whatever is given in sense data, can be rigorously translated, or transformed, into statements about another object without semantic loss. Reduction was later important in Car-

nap's view of physicalism, in which an object or concept is said to be reducible if and only if statements about it can be replaced by statements about the other object.<sup>28</sup>

These two ahistorical views of epistemological construction are very different. Husserl is concerned with objects for a transcendental subject after the reduction, which is intended to put existence into brackets by focusing merely on what is directly given. Carnap is interested in scientific modeling of reality for a solipsistic subject, or for an individual in terms of individual experience. In Husserl, constitution and intentionality are correlative concepts. In Carnap, constitution and reduction are correlative concepts. Husserl takes an explicitly idealist line while, depending on the interpretation, Carnap either develops or successfully avoids an idealist approach. Husserl, who understands the subject as absolute, hence wholly independent from constraints of all kinds, specifically desires to avoid subjective idealism, which he identifies with Berkeley's view that *esse* consists in *percipi*. In disjoining *esse* and *percipi*,<sup>29</sup> while espousing a phenomenological form of idealism understood as the idea that we construct what we know, Husserl uses the term "reality" in a widened sense to refer to anything which can be intended, including nature as well as anything else. Carnap, who has nothing in his conceptual tool bag resembling a phenomenological reduction, takes the subject as a finite human being who, in order to know the mind-independent world, or reality, must construct a conceptual framework. Carnap, who distinguishes between empirical and metaphysical reality, and who takes "actual" to mean "real," depicts his theory of constitution as prior to and neutral to distinctions between realism, idealism, and phenomenalism.<sup>30</sup> According to Carnap, realism holds that constructed, heteropsychological objects are real, whereas subjective idealism holds that heteropsychological, but not physical, objects are real.<sup>31</sup>

Husserl's view, which concerns experience whatsoever, is even wider than Carnap's, which is limited to the already immensely broad domain of all possible objects of science as the privileged source of knowledge of reality. The positions are different and cannot merely be assimilated one to the other. Husserl seems to conflate the idea that the subject provides meaning to whatever it perceives with the very different idea that the phenomenological subject is absolute, hence absolutely independent of time and place. Carnap's conviction that scientific explanation is constructed by real finite subjects seems closer to the mark. Yet both approaches suffer from a disinterest in justifying, or inability to justify, an approach to knowledge through a conception of construction.

Husserl's phenomenology represents an effort, by rejecting naturalism and historicism, to make out the alleged parallel between the transcendental plane and what Husserl later called the life world. If the subject were in the world, and not transcendent to it, then the need for a theory of construction would not arise. This explains the apparent absence of any interest in construction in Husserl's writings before he discovered the idea of reduction, which generates the problem for which the theory of constitution is advanced as a solution. Yet the difficulty remains that there is apparently no way, perhaps no way at all, and Husserl provides none, to go from the transcendental plane to the life world.

The situation is different for Carnap, who is concerned to find a way to model what is not given through what is given. Carnap's constructivism is related to forms of logical empiricism featured in Russell, the early Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle. Carnap wishes to avoid metaphysics, since in his opinion, its questions are not amenable to empirical treatment. Yet he presents a metaphysical view which presupposes, but does not demonstrate a cognitive link between the constructed ob-

ject and what it is intended to explain or model. Even if other difficulties in his position could be answered, his theory would be plausible if and only if this link obtained. It has been said that Carnap's rational reconstruction concerns arriving at the public world of scientific knowledge on the basis of cross-sections of the private experiences of individuals.<sup>32</sup> Yet he cannot be proposing literally to construct the world as it is—the suspicion that he might be proposing to do so is the source, for instance, of Coffa's objection to Carnap's residual idealism—since there is a world, or empirical reality, which we attempt to know through its rational reconstruction in the form of a scientific theory.

Perhaps the deepest difficulty in the constructivism Carnap defended during his *Aufbau* period lies in his effort to justify the presupposed link between the theory of the object and what the theory is about, in Carnap's language the link between unified science and reality. Carnap's approach invokes an inferred relation between the basic units of empirical experience out of which he claims to construct the public, systematic scientific theory, and the private world of individuals. Wittgenstein's Tractarian theory presupposes but does not demonstrate a one-to-one relation between atomic facts and atomic propositions, which has never been demonstrated. Carnap simply takes over but also fails to resolve the difficulties of this approach. He does not show that our theories directly grasp what is given in experience. If Quine is right, he cannot show this crucial point since theories are always undetermined by what they refer to. If he had succeeded, Carnap would have provided a foundationalist account of science directly continuous with experience. The failure of his approach, which founders on the inability to demonstrate the link between the scientific system and reality, between the *explanans* and the *explanandum*, resides in Carnap's inability to make out this single central point.

## IDEALISM, KNOWLEDGE, AND METAPHYSICAL REALISM

The appeal to metaphysical realism to refute idealism rejects it for reasons unrelated to idealism's own claims while concealing difficulties in metaphysical realism.

Idealism in all its forms turns on epistemological claims which Marxism and analytic philosophy, which are both committed to metaphysical realism, reject on ontological grounds. Ontological criticism of an epistemological doctrine or doctrines misses the mark for three reasons. It criticizes idealism in general, which does not exist. Then it raises an ontological objection to an epistemological approach which makes no clear ontological claims. Finally, it incorrectly assumes, without demonstrating the point, that metaphysical realism is valid. Yet metaphysical realism, which is often advanced as a viable alternative to idealism, and which still has numerous defenders, has never been effectively defended. No one has ever shown that we can reliably claim to grasp the mind-independent world as it is.

The difficulties besetting metaphysical realism count against any and all forms of idealism committed to it. The old way of ideas rests on three claims: first, there is a way the world is; second, the world can be known as it is; and, third, the world can be known directly as it is. The first two claims are shared by both the old and the new ways of ideas. The difference between them concerns the third claim.

The old way of ideas presupposes the dubious suggestion that, under the right conditions, at least some selected observers can directly "see," cognize, grasp, or know mind-independent reality as it is. Platonism invokes a notorious visual metaphor, which postulates an identity between "seeing" and knowing. According to this approach, to see is to know, and to know requires that the cognitive object literally be "seen" — not, if there



is a difference between appearing and being, as it appears, but as it is. Since to “see” the object as it is is to know it and presumably further to know that one knows it, the very possibility of doubt is excluded in the very act of “seeing.” In the Seventh Letter, which may not be genuine, Plato suggests that after much study a self-sustaining blaze is lit in the soul<sup>33</sup> and that at a certain point the understanding of someone who has the suitable capacities will be flooded with light that will never later be extinguished.<sup>34</sup>

An obvious difficulty in the old way of ideas lies in the necessary appeal—necessary, since only some selected individuals are supposedly capable of “seeing” mind-independent reality—to private, as opposed to public, cognition. In modern times, where the emphasis lies in intersubjective, hence publicly verifiable, cognitive claims, private claims for direct knowledge of what is, like religious claims for direct knowledge of God, are regarded as insufficient, suspect, not worthy of acceptance, hence unacceptable. The mere fact that they are unverifiable according to currently accepted standards of verification means that they cannot be taken as successful instances of objective cognition.

The old way of ideas rejects any appeal to causality, which, following modern science, is a central factor in the new way of ideas. Epistemological representationalism presupposes a causal relation between what does the representing and what is represented. Versions of the new way of ideas defended by Descartes, Locke, and Kant rest on a causal theory of perception, according to which, in Kantian language, the idea, or representation, is, or can without contradiction be thought of as, the effect for which the cognitive objective is, or can without contradiction be thought of as, the cause. For the new way of ideas, cognition supposes a reverse inference from effect to cause, from the idea in the mind, which is taken not as merely symbolizing, but on

the contrary as faithfully representing the world, to the world, which is considered to be its cause.

In adopting a causal epistemological framework, the new way of ideas is anti-Platonic. Platonism presupposes a causal ontological framework, but rejects a causal epistemological framework. Platonism obscurely claims that, through “participation,” ideas cause things, which are understood to consist in visible, mutable appearances in time of an invisible, immutable, and atemporal reality.<sup>35</sup> But it denies any cognitive inference from appearance to reality, that is, from the world of things to the world of ideas, in ruling out an epistemological appeal to causal inference. On the contrary, the new way of ideas straightforwardly relies on causal inference in identifying a cognitive path leading from the mind-independent external object, or reality, to its merely mental representation.

The evident difficulty in all forms of the new way of ideas lies in making out the “reverse” inference from effect to cause, that is, from ideas in the mind to the way the world is. In the *Phaedo*, Plato, who rejects causality as it functions in natural science as an epistemological principle, criticizes the science of his day, which relies on a primitive theory of causality. He complains that causal analysis is nonspecific, hence epistemologically unacceptable.<sup>36</sup> If specificity is important, then Plato’s critical point, which can be detached from his criticism of ancient Greek science, is difficult to counter. Hegel later generalizes the same point in his attack on modern science. Distantly following Plato, Hegel complains that natural scientific laws, such as Newton’s law of gravitation, fail to explain nature.<sup>37</sup> The difficulty, which Hegel correctly sees, lies in showing that ideas understood as representations in fact correctly represent objects understood as causes. In other words, it must be possible, in order for the causal theory of knowledge to be plausible, on the

basis of an idea in the mind, taken as a representation, to know the world, taken as its cause.

There is no agreement about what it means to represent. It is notoriously difficult to specify what a successful representation should look like or consist in. If one assumes, following Goodman, that the representation must “fit” with what it represents,<sup>38</sup> that leaves open the difficulty that causes and effects need not resemble each other. The assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand is widely believed to have led to, hence in that sense “caused,” the First World War. Yet the assassination, which is the cause, does not “fit” with, or otherwise resemble, its effect. It is further difficult to construct anything resembling a univocal causal chain leading from the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand taken as the cause to the First World War understood as its effect.

It is even more difficult to show that representations represent. Rationalism and empiricism are symmetrical approaches to knowledge. Efforts by rationalists to argue from the mind to the world, and by empiricists to argue from the world to the mind, presuppose an indemonstrable relation between ideas, understood as representations, and objects, understood as causes, in arguing for an inference from effect to cause. No known form of this argument is successful. As a rationalist, Descartes insists on limiting the will in accepting clear and distinct ideas whose relation to the world rests on a mere, indemonstrable conviction about God’s nature. As an empiricist, Locke relies on the supposed capacity to identify ideas that, since the subject did not create them, cannot be demonstrated but are believed on what seems to be mere epistemic faith to represent the cognitive object.

The circularity of Descartes’ argument was already raised as an objection in the responses to the *Meditations* before the book was published.<sup>39</sup> The Cartesian argument consists in proving

the existence of the cogito, then of God, and finally in ascribing a particular role to God. Since God is not a deceiver, this in turn establishes, under certain conditions, the cognitive reliability of the human mind.

Descartes' reasoning with respect to God as not a possible source of error is clearly circular. It only follows that God is not responsible for perceptual error if God's nature corresponds to my idea, that is, if my ideas correspond to mind-independent external things, including God. Since he has not yet shown this correspondence, Descartes cannot draw this inference with respect to God. In short, Descartes is indeed guilty of the Cartesian circle. Left unclear is whether, assuming that, as such thinkers as Fichte and Hegel believe, cognitive claims are necessarily circular, Descartes' approach to knowledge is undermined by its circularity.<sup>40</sup>

The case for the empiricist view of the mind as a mirror of the world, a staple of empiricist epistemology, is adumbrated by Bacon,<sup>41</sup> refuted by Rorty,<sup>42</sup> and made most impressively in Locke's influential conception of simple ideas as necessarily true. According to Locke, ideas, which have no truth-value in themselves, are true or false only when they refer beyond themselves. Complex ideas in the mind are composed of simple ideas, which come into the mind through sensation and reflection, but which the mind is not itself at liberty to create.<sup>43</sup> The understanding is passive with respect to simple ideas, which are imprinted on it from without. Like a mirror, simple ideas correctly represent the external world.<sup>44</sup> Mistakes in complex ideas arise through the incorrect combination of simple ideas, which cannot be in error concerning the external world.

Locke offers two arguments for his interpretation of simple ideas as necessarily true: their alleged divine source, and what would now be regarded as the failure of a correspondence theory of truth. He interprets his claim that simple ideas are provided

by God<sup>45</sup> in two ways. First, since simple ideas cannot be false, they are necessarily true with respect to the existence of things outside us. Second, they cannot be false with respect to the essence of such things, since our complex ideas of the essence of anything merely consist in the combination of simple ideas, which are necessarily true. The only way we can be mistaken is when we incorrectly combine simple ideas in making a false judgment.<sup>46</sup>

The second argument, which is independent of the first, is based on two related claims. On the one hand, we cannot construct, produce, or otherwise make simple ideas. And on the other hand, since our only access to things is through ideas, we cannot make, produce, or otherwise construct an idea of them that is false. For a person “cannot make a wrong or false idea of a thing which is not otherwise known to him but by the idea he has of it in his mind . . .”<sup>47</sup>

Locke’s argument was quickly answered by such critics as Reid, Hume, and Berkeley. Reid, as already noted, suggests that any claim to know ideas, but not things, lands us in skepticism. Berkeley denies the distinction between primary and secondary ideas on which Locke relies in contending that all ideas are secondary. This line of argument prevents any inference from ideas to things, or from causes to their effects by refuting all versions of the new way of ideas, including Kant’s later effort to make out a form of representationalism. Hume’s attack on causality undermines causal inference of any kind, including, as Kant clearly saw, all forms of natural science.

#### PLATONISM, REPRESENTATIONALISM, AND METAPHYSICAL REALISM

There is a direct relation between the view of the real that one defends and the epistemological conclusion to which it

leads. Metaphysical realism, which has been favored throughout Western philosophy, leads not to knowledge but to skepticism in raising the epistemological standard so high that it cannot be met. Since it cannot be shown that we know or ever could know the way the world is as it is, to make such a claim a necessary condition of knowledge is to put it out of reach, in a word to render it impossible to meet. The old and new ways of ideas both fail because it has never been shown how any approach to knowledge that identifies it with a grasp of the way the world is as it is can succeed.

This skeptical conclusion, which is sometimes drawn with respect to representative theories of perception, such as Reid's criticism of Locke, can be generalized to representative, or indirect, theories of knowledge, and to nonrepresentative, or direct, theories of knowledge of all kinds. Representative theories of perception claim to know through successful representation of the real, although the correspondence of the representation to what is represented is indemonstrable. Direct, or nonrepresentational theories of knowledge, such as Platonism and allied doctrines, lay claim to a direct grasp of what is as it is that is also indemonstrable.

Efforts to solve the problem of knowledge through either the old or the new way of ideas inevitably rely on a frequently claimed, but never demonstrated and arguably indemonstrable cognitive relation between ideas and reality. Either an idea in the mind or a representation in space and time is taken without proof as strictly equivalent to mind-independent reality, or it is taken, again without proof, as a reliable indication of this reality. The moral of the discussion of idealist efforts to base a theory of knowledge on a cognitive grasp of the metaphysically real is that all efforts to make out metaphysical realism fail. We can show neither that we know mind-independent reality directly, for instance through direct cognitive intuition of the real,

revelation, telepathy, telekinesis, or in some other way, nor that we know mind-independent reality indirectly, that is, through an indirect relation mediated by ideas understood as representations.

The striking asymmetry between the old and the new ways of ideas is equally fatal for both. The old way of ideas rejects a causal analysis of knowledge in arguing for a direct, but indemonstrable grasp of the real as it is. The new way of ideas accepts only a causal analysis of knowledge in arguing for indirect knowledge of this view of the real. The old way of ideas rejects experience and science in opting for knowledge of a reality allegedly distinct from and lying beyond appearance. The new way of ideas insists on empiricism and science in arguing for knowledge through the inexplicable appearance of what is as it is.

The opposition between the old and the new ways of ideas is neither overcome, nor diminished in later debate. Insistence on a grasp of the metaphysical real as the criterion of what it means to know is mainly rhetorical, unconvincing, useful as a statement of intent or as an item of belief but certainly not acceptable as an epistemological argument. In modern philosophy, claims for direct knowledge of the mind-independent real are as frequent as claims for indirect knowledge of the real. Such claims take many forms, none of which is more convincing than the pervasive view, influenced by the success of modern science, that some future iteration of the causal theory of perception will eventually suffice to show it successfully leads us to knowledge of what is as it is. Kant's linguistic claim that "appearance" means that something appears, since it would be absurd were this not to be the case, inappropriately deduces objects from concepts in suggesting that words determine reality. Various forms of the phenomenological view that things show themselves (Husserl) or that being shows itself (Heidegger) con-

flate human activity, since human beings act, and passive cognitive objects, which do not act. Stephen Weinberg's conviction that science discovers the real<sup>48</sup> is unconvincing since, as Kuhn points out, there is no reason to think we are getting closer to knowing the way the world is.<sup>49</sup>

Conversely, arguments that a causal theory leads, albeit indirectly, to a grasp of the real also fail. The reason is very general. By definition all representational approaches to knowledge claim that access to the cognitive object necessarily depends on its representation. In Kant's original formulation of the problem, the problem of knowledge consists in knowing the relation of the representation to the object. But there is no way to determine this short of knowing the object in independence of its representation, hence no way to show, if representation is the sole means of access to the cognitive object, that representation in fact represents.

This negative conclusion is fatal for any and all theories of knowledge based on metaphysical realism, including the old and the new ways of ideas, since no convincing analysis of the claim to know the way the world is, either directly or indirectly, has ever been presented. Yet if we cannot show that we know the mind-independent real either directly or indirectly, then claims for knowledge based on metaphysical realism must be given up.

## REALISM AND KNOWLEDGE

Metaphysical realism fails in all known variations and there is no reason whatever to believe, after some two and a half millennia of effort by some of the best philosophical minds, that it still remains even a potentially promising doctrine. Yet since claims to know are always claims about what is, there is simply no alternative to realism. Knowledge claims typically concern what is, more precisely what is as it is, as distinguished from



what appears or only appears to be the case, or is thought to be, might be, could be, or should be the case. With respect to knowledge, subjectivity and objectivity are routinely regarded as exclusive alternatives that together exhaust the possibilities. In an epistemological context, the stress on objectivity is typically taken to mean avoiding subjectivity of all kinds. A short list of types of subjectivity to be avoided in making objective knowledge claims might include making them depend on who one is, on one's relation to one's surroundings, as well as on education, political affiliation, psychological state, religious conviction, ideology, health, special cognitive circumstances, and so on. In making a claim for objective cognition, one is simultaneously excluding subjective factors which might conceivably impede one from grasping the real, or what is really there, as opposed to illusion, delusion, ideology, doctrine, social convention, tradition, or mere unsupported belief. Metaphysical realism, which is the most obvious, but naïve view of what it means to know, leads to epistemological skepticism in setting an unreachable standard for knowledge, which, as a result, remains forever out of reach.

The obvious way out of this epistemological dilemma is not to abandon realism of any form, or realism *tout court*, which simply cannot be abandoned, since there is no reasonable alternative to it. It is rather to adopt a defensible form of realism as the epistemological standard. The alternative to buying into metaphysical realism, hence to falling into skepticism, lies in changing the criterion of what it means to know. This inference is reasonable for three reasons.

First, there are many different types of realism among which to choose. A short, incomplete list might include ordinary, metaphysical, empirical, scientific, literary, and aesthetic types. Ordinary realism is the realism of the ordinary, untrained individual, someone who is unaware of the many difficulties phi-

losophers have detected in claims to know over the history of Western philosophy, and who believes that in ordinary experience we in fact know the world as it really is. Nothing further need be said about metaphysical realism. Empirical realism limits the cognitive endeavor to whatever is given in experience without regard to whatever might lie outside it. Scientific realism presupposes that the real is whatever natural science eventually determines it to be. This view is sometimes linked to the idea that science will eventually tell us what is, as in Peirce's interesting conception of the long run. Scientific realism is linked as well to scientism, or the conviction, prominently associated with W. Sellars, that science, as opposed to the so-called folk view, his name for what I am calling ordinary realism, is the only reliable source of knowledge.<sup>50</sup> Moral realism is an approach that rejects moral idealism. This distinction is roughly parallel to the well-known distinction between political realism and political idealism. Literary realism is a specific stylistic technique, closely related to naturalism, as in Zola's novels. Marxists such as Lukács often contend that the literary technique of social realism is best adapted to providing accurate insight into the social world.<sup>51</sup> The Mexican novelist Gabriel García Márquez exemplifies a literary style called magical realism. Aesthetic realism is the effort to depict scenes and objects often with quasi-photographic detail, as with such Dutch seventeenth-century painters of interiors as Vermeer.

Second, as concerns theory of knowledge there is no obligation to choose metaphysical realism. Neither tradition, nor force of habit, adequately justifies this choice. In the West, perhaps in imitation of religion, as early as Parmenides a long succession of thinkers has stubbornly held to the conviction that to know is to know the way the mind-independent world is. The strongest motive behind this conviction seems to be the desire to make good on the intuitive belief of the ordinary

individual, someone almost instinctively and certainly unreflectively committed to ordinary realism, who holds without either training or deep insight into the problem of knowledge that we indeed really know the world as it is. Yet a moment's reflection suffices to show that there is no conceptual obligation to accept this standard rather than another one. Neither the philosophical debate nor the progress of science nor any other known cognitive approach legitimates the claim to know the world other than as it appears within different types of cognitive frameworks, paradigms, points of view, or epistemological perspectives. The type of science which emerged in the West in the seventeenth century relies on ever more refined predictive ability. Yet it makes just as much sense to believe we are continuing to make scientific progress in developing predictively stronger theories without making the further claim that science uncovers, discovers, lays bare, cognizes, intuitively grasps the metaphysically real. Predictive ability, which is a hallmark of modern science, is not obviously related to grasping the metaphysically real. There is no reason to believe that scientific theories do anything more than symbolize the real world (Cassirer) within different scientific paradigms (Kuhn). The predictive ability of modern science, especially quantum electrodynamics, is sometimes advanced as a reason to believe that science uncovers or at least might someday uncover the real world as it lies beyond illusion, delusion, or mere appearance. If utility were truth, it would make sense to infer that if a theory is useful it is also true. Since utility is not truth, it does not follow that because a theory is useful, it is also true, nor that it correctly grasps what is.

Third, on strictly utilitarian grounds it makes eminent good sense to choose a different, more practical realist standard. Theory of knowledge needs to be practically applicable. The difficulty with metaphysical realism is that it has never been

shown that one does or ever could know the way the world is, hence has never been shown that this criterion functions constitutively, that is, other than as a regulative ideal. Yet it makes eminent good sense to choose as a standard a form of realism which functions constitutively in practice, hence suffices to avoid skepticism.

It seems reasonable to hold that the type of realism one chooses to defend should be a function of what one hopes to accomplish. For theory of knowledge, empirical realism, which Kant favored, is the obvious alternative to metaphysical realism. Metaphysical realism, which is not useful, is a mere theoretical posit, which functions in Plato's *Republic* as an answer to the question of what knowledge beyond hypotheses of all kind would presumably look like. Unlike metaphysical realism, empirical realism is practically useful when the problem of knowledge consists in coming to grips with and in knowing the real surrounding world, or in building on empirical reality in seeking knowledge within specialized fields. The real empirical world is the world in which, as the Stoics believed, we live and breathe and have our being. It is the world into which we are born, within which we are socialized, within which we live and finally die, within which we carry out our daily lives, and which is the basis of any and all cognitive activities. The hierarchy among forms of reality begins with empirical reality, on which other forms of reality build. In different ways, religious, artistic, scientific, moral, and aesthetic theories appeal to, as well as abstract from, the ordinary everyday world. The fact that real human beings only turn to religion, art, science, and other forms of culture on the basis of the real empirical world suggests that it is at least experientially prior to other realities. Religious art documents various forms of religious understanding of ordinary and even extraordinary human beings concerned with the religious dimension of experience. Secular art reacts to ordinary experi-

ence within the variable styles available to the artist. Specialized cognitive realms, such as chemistry, biology, and physics, appeal to special rules, which are worked out through negotiation among those who labor in those domains, and which govern the shared understanding of different forms of scientific reality.

### KANT, IDEALIST CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND KNOWLEDGE

The old and the new ways of ideas feature metaphysical realism, which precludes the need to appeal to constructivism of any kind. For a metaphysical realist, knowledge is the result of uncovering, discovering, or revealing what is as it is. German idealist constructivism, but not constructivism as such, begins in Kant's effort to explain knowledge after abandoning metaphysical realism. The interest of forms of idealist constructivism obviously lies in its comparative advantage with respect to alternative solutions of the problem of knowledge. Kant intervenes in a modern debate on knowledge dominated by the continental rationalists and the English empiricists. Efforts by these to solve the problem of knowledge rely respectively on attributing an epistemological role to God, as in theories of human rational capacities whose function is divinely guaranteed; on psycho-physical parallelism (Spinoza); on preestablished harmony (Leibniz); or again on accepting an inexplicable grasp of what is as it is. Examples include the claim that, under the right conditions, the human mind provides a mirror image of what is as it is (Bacon), or again that it contains certain ideas that cannot be mistaken (Locke). Though Descartes is often thought to begin a movement that depends on reason that is wholly emancipated from faith, his form of rationalism is weakened by reliance on God as an epistemic principle. The defect of English empiricism consists in the inability to demonstrate claims to

know. Kant improves on continental rationalism in separating reason from faith, and on the empiricists in not merely asserting but further demonstrating the claim to know through epistemological constructivism. In comparison with preceding approaches to knowledge, the considerable advantage of Kantian constructivism is to propose a model of knowledge that relies on neither God nor mere assertion in basing knowledge on the activity through which we in some unknown way “construct” what we know. Its disadvantage, as noted above, lies in its inability to provide a plausible account of what it means for cognitive subjects to “construct” their cognitive objects.

Since Kant, the entire effort to work out a viable account of epistemological constructivism has been occupied with overcoming this lacuna in Kant’s position through providing an account of what it means to “construct” our cognitive objects, including the meaning of “construction” in an epistemological setting. Representationalism, Kant’s initial, dualist approach to knowledge, formulates the problem as one of relating a representation to a world composed of mind-independent objects, independent of the invariant categorical framework Kant has at his disposal. In abandoning representationalism, Kant gives up dualism for monism in claiming we know only what we “construct,” thereby generating a series of new difficulties.

One is the obvious question of what meaning to give to the claim that as a necessary condition of knowledge we can be said to “construct” such cognitive objects as tables and chairs, but also submicroscopic objects and distant stars. Now perhaps Kant only means to call attention to the distinction between objects as they are in themselves, which we do not construct, and as they are known by claiming that we construct objects as they are given in experience. Yet this line of argument only postpones, but does not resolve, the representationalist problem, which returns in constructivist guise as the difficulty of

understanding how what we know relates to the world as it is, or, to restate the question, how such constructions guarantee the objectivity of cognition. Further, if we bracket off the very idea of the mind-independent world, which lies beyond cognitive access, there is the difficulty of claiming objective knowledge merely on the basis of a construction.

Through a shift from representationalism to constructivism, Kant implies, but does not explain, why epistemological practice must follow epistemological theory. The justification is provided in Kant's misnamed essay on the relation between theory and practice. Instead of acknowledging the primacy of practice, which Kant elsewhere sought to justify, for instance in successive introductions to the *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilkraft*, 1790), hence by pointing to the resistance of practice to theory, this essay in fact justifies a merely theoretical approach to practical problems.<sup>52</sup>

Kant's inability to cognize practice is nowhere more evident than in his rigid, wholly unbending moral attitude, which consists in reducing what we should do to an affair of reason alone, hence to a question of knowledge, thereby parting company with such obvious constraints as prior background or contingent social circumstances. His utter refusal to take into account the situation of finite human subjects is manifest in his bifurcation between actions capable of practical reason in his specific sense, hence involving autonomous moral agents, and heteronymous actions by those who are by definition incapable of practical reason in his sense, hence are immoral agents—in practice most, perhaps all of us. Kant's acknowledgment that according to his theory there has perhaps never been a moral person only shows his inability to analyze the moral domain, but not that no one is moral or that moral individuals simply do not exist.

The post-Kantian idealist approach to knowledge of all kinds, hence to epistemological constructivism, largely consists

in supplying a theory of practice, hence of epistemological practice, lacking in Kant's resolutely theoretical approach to knowledge of all kinds. Kant, who follows the traditional philosophical acceptance of the mathematical model as the standard of knowledge, and who typically takes geometry as a science already completed in Euclid's time, invokes a quasi-mathematical, a priori form of construction to guarantee the apodicticity of cognitive claims.

In his Copernican revolution in philosophy, Kant inverts the procedure according to which knowledge depends on mind-independent objects by making cognitive objects depend on the subject. Post-Kantian contributions to the theory of practice further transform Kant's constructivist approach by holding that both subjects and objects, knower and known, are co-constituted in repositioning the approach to knowledge on a practical basis. In post-Kantian German idealism, the three most important innovations in the post-Kantian effort to complete the critical philosophy according to its spirit arguably include Fichte's revised conception of the subject, which henceforth links knowledge to the achievement of finite human beings; Hegel's recasting of knowledge as an ongoing process, which unfolds in real time within a series of social and historical contexts in which theories emerge in response to successive experiences; and Marx's application of a quasi-Hegelian model in a theory of modern industrial society centered on its economic component in terms of a Fichtean conception of the subject as basically active.

The end result of this series of changes is to transform Kant's question of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge whatsoever into the very different question of how finite human beings in fact arrive at knowledge. In place of Kant's still Cartesian, counterfactual, merely epistemological view of the subject as free in a manner unconstrained by time and place, con-



strained only by its own rationality, the post-Kantian idealists invoke an increasingly anthropological concept of the cognitive subject as already in the world, hence limited by its surroundings, which can be symbolized by Hegel's famous statement "Hic Rhodus, hic saltus."<sup>53</sup>

The anthropological transformation of the epistemological subject in post-Kantian German idealism does not abandon epistemology, but rather restates the problem of knowledge as the practical question of what human beings can know. In calling attention to the context in which cognitive claims are formulated, the problem is not finally solved but at most only stated for the first time in appropriate form. Idealist debate on knowledge after Kant features increasingly elaborate depictions of the surrounding context in which cognition occurs and by which it is limited. One difficulty is that since no one knows how to analyze context, no one knows precisely what it means to say that cognitive claims depend on it. There are many and conflicting ways to analyze context, for example as the cultural surroundings (Hegel), the relation of culture to an underlying economic base (Marx), a social structure tending to conserve itself (Lévi-Strauss), the constraint imposed by a prevailing religion (M. Weber), unconscious psychological conflict (Freud), language games (Wittgenstein), conceptual paradigms (Kuhn), and so on. Despite the inability at present to formulate a satisfactory concept of context, we at least know that cognitive claims are formulated within and depend on one or another specific context.

A second, related dimension is epistemological relativism, which is the immediate consequence of adopting any form of epistemological contextualism. Any variation on the claim that cognition depends on context means that such claims are not wholly independent or absolute, but rather intrinsically relative. Epistemological relativism, which can be understood in differ-

ent ways,<sup>54</sup> has had a bad reputation ever since Protagoras linked claims to know to human beings early in the Greek tradition. Plato, who perceived the threat to his own brand of the emerging normative conception of epistemological claims as irrelative, in his case the direct grasp of the mind-independent real, answered Protagoras through ridicule rather than argument. Since Plato, epistemological relativism has often been satirized, for instance as the convenient view, no more than a straw man since no one defends it, that any claim to know is as good as any other claim.<sup>55</sup>

Epistemological relativism, although not under that name, is a widespread, rarely acknowledged, highly controversial doctrine.<sup>56</sup> As an epistemological doctrine, “relativism” obviously means relative to (something). Numerous thinkers, ancient and modern, continue to cling to the normative conception of knowledge as successfully cognizing metaphysical reality while denying that claims to know are in any way restricted, or less than absolute, hence denying that cognition is relative. It is not surprising, in view of the still widespread disinterest in the history of philosophy and the difficulty in learning from it, that the lesson of the post-Kantian German idealist shift to epistemological relativism as a result of working through Kant’s legacy has not often been drawn. The venerable conception of knowledge as unrestricted, or unlimited, hence independent of context, or absolute, which is as widespread now as it has ever been, is represented in our time by Husserl (who later seems to turn to relativism),<sup>57</sup> Habermas (who later abandons the idea that truth must emerge from unrestricted discussion),<sup>58</sup> Nagel (who thinks we can reach the last word on the topic),<sup>59</sup> Davidson (who at one time believed in a linguistic version of the correspondence theory of truth),<sup>60</sup> Putnam (who in his internal realist phase held that different theories refer to the same reality),<sup>61</sup> and many others.

The very different idea of epistemological relativism is expressed differently by numerous thinkers widely scattered throughout the discussion. According to Marx, who in this sense follows Aristotle, our explanatory categories are not historically fixed, or “irrelative,” but necessarily change as a function of changes in the cognitive object, in what they are meant to explain.<sup>62</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, ideas are true in the particular instant, in which they are wholly true.<sup>63</sup> In the later Wittgenstein’s view, cognitive claims are true or false in reference to a subjacent conceptual framework that is itself neither true nor false.<sup>64</sup> And the later Carnap indexes explanatory claims to ideal languages, or categorical systems.<sup>65</sup> The basic insight common to these different formulations lies in the idea that all forms of cognition are not absolute, but rather relative to, hence depend on, a variable categorical framework.

Under the influence of the later Wittgenstein, contextualism is currently popular. But many more thinkers are willing to grant that cognitive claims are mediated by cognitive frameworks in respect to which they are relative, than are willing to make the further inference that such claims are also historical. Yet since contexts change, to admit contextualism is also to admit historicism. It follows that contextualism and historicism are inseparable doctrines.

It is at least conceivable that some cognitive claims are ahistorical. Plato and Kant make ahistorical claims, the former in apparently invoking an idea for each appearance, and the latter in deducing a supposedly closed series of no more than twelve categories to serve a similar purpose. Yet whatever “deduction” means in this context, it does not follow that the categories are hardwired as it were, hence cannot be other than those that Kant identifies. In different ways, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, and Cassirer propose historically variable categorical frameworks. Chomsky, who has argued over many years for a

common linguistic framework on the basis of the alleged failure to explain the acquisition of language on empirical grounds, has never been able to give an account of that deep structure, which remains no more than a posit, or hypothesis, with no demonstrable biological basis, and so far no more than slender linguistic support. He may now have even abandoned the whole idea.<sup>66</sup>

Some, perhaps all, conceptual frameworks, such as those utilized in physical theory, or theoretical efforts to know nature extending over thousands of years, obviously change over time. The importance of the change from the geocentric to the heliocentric worldview ushered in by the Copernican astronomical revolution can scarcely be overestimated. The historically variable conception of nature offers numerous, occasionally stunning examples in natural science. The shortest distance between two points, which, following Euclidean geometry, is still a straight line in Newtonian mechanics, is a geodesic in Einsteinian relativity. In quantum mechanics, the strong view of causal relations is replaced by a stochastic analysis. There is no way to know that any cognitive conception will be immune to the ravages of time.

### NOT THE LAST WORD

This book has discussed various forms of idealism, centering around Kantian constructivism, to which the critical philosophy gives a powerful new focus, as approaches to the problem of knowledge. In guise of a conclusion, I will end by saying this is not the last word about Kant, constructivism, idealism, or the problem of knowledge. It is hopefully merely an early part of a new chapter yet to be written in which idealism—particularly German idealism, which has been in eclipse for approximately a century—receives new, more serious scrutiny, tied more closely

to the texts, in which its arguments and concerns are evaluated according to the intentions specified by their authors.

I have been arguing that there is no idealism, though there are types of idealism. I have further been arguing that as exemplified by Kant and the post-Kantians, idealist constructivism is a new, very interesting, very promising approach, whose merits and promise have as yet scarcely been debated. Understood in terms of the promise and performance of its various forms, "idealism" is both a spent force, embarked on a hopeless task over some two and a half millennia, and paradoxically a young doctrine, which remains to be worked out and evaluated. Since philosophy only changes over the course of centuries, it is still too early to determine whether optimism about the future of constructivist idealism is justified. This can only be measured in the fullness of time, in what Peirce perhaps facetiously calls the long run, in the debate pitting constructivist idealism against present and future alternative approaches to knowledge.

## NOTES

### Introduction

1. Starting with Engels, Marxists have traditionally argued that idealists identify with the bourgeoisie. See Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, edited by C. P. Dutt, New York: International Publishers, 1941.
2. This seems to be Popper's view. In a work published immediately after the Second World War, he devotes lengthy space to "showing" that Hegel is an enemy of what he calls the open society. See K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London, Routledge, 1945, 2 vols.
3. Thus Quine, following Moore, writes: "We cannot significantly question the reality of the external world, or deny that there is evidence of external objects in the testimony of our senses . . ." "The Scope and Language of Science," in W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 229.
4. According to Moore, idealists doubt the existence of the external world. See "The Refutation of Idealism," in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922, 1958.
5. Warnock seems to know almost nothing about British idealism, which he regards as difficult to describe. See G. J. Warnock, *English Philosophy Since 1900*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 2-10.
6. Strawson provides a striking example. Strawson's treatment of Kant ignores Kant's transcendental idealism in stressing his empirical realism. See P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London: Methuen, 1966. He is countered by Allison, who attempts to make sense of Kant's transcendental idealism in distinguishing between a psychological and a logical approach to knowledge. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
7. The analytic turn against idealism led to a turn against Hegel that continues to this day. It is striking that though some analytic figures are returning to Hegel (e.g., Sellars, McDowell, Brandom), none of them ever considers his relation to idealism. Everything happens as if it were

possible to be interested in or influenced by Hegel without taking into account his idealism.

8. Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1900 first edition, 1967 seventh impression, p. 14.
9. For his refutation of Plato, Hegel and Marx, see K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London: Routledge, 1966, 2 vols.
10. For the refutation of Marx and Marxism, see Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge, 1966.
11. There are signs that analytic thinkers are becoming more interested in the possible philosophical importance of the history of philosophy. See, e.g., Tom Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers, *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.
12. See, for this argument, Tom Rockmore, *Marx After Marxism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
13. See, for this argument, Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
14. See Benedetto Croce, *What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel*, translated by Douglas Ainslie, London: Macmillan, 1915.
15. "What Is Pragmatism?" in *The Essential Peirce*, edited by Nathan Houser et al., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, II, p. 338.
16. Henrich has steadfastly promoted this view in a number of books. See, e.g., Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, edited by Eckart Förster, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
17. It is useful to note the difference between metaphysical realism, which is an ontological term, and metaphysical exposition, which exhibits a concept a priori. For the latter, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, B 38, pp. 157–158.
18. Hacking, who also recognizes that the choice is arbitrary, prefers "construction." See Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 47–49.
19. See, e.g., John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52 (4), 1998, pp. 855–85; Alex Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *ibid.*, 46 (5), 1992, pp. 391–425.
20. Mathematical constructivism is related to the intuitionist school, according to which proofs require the identification of an instance or ex-

- ample. See A. Heyting, *Intuitionism: An Introduction*, Amsterdam: North Holland, 1956.
21. Russian constructivism was a movement that rejected pure art for politically engaged art. For the Russian constructivist movement, see Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
  22. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xiii, p. 109.
  23. For a similar view, see Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 319.
  24. It can be argued that philosophy since that time, including twentieth-century philosophy, largely consists in a series of reactions to Kant. See Tom Rockmore, *In Kant's Wake: Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
  25. For two recent studies of German idealism which consider its relation to romanticism, see Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860*; and Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
  26. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, p. 211.
  27. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 370, pp. 395–396.
  28. Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, translated by James Haden, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 252–254.
  29. For an exception, see Wayne Waxman, *Kant and the Empiricists*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
  30. In recent, very detailed studies, neither Pinkard (*German Philosophy 1760–1860*) nor Beiser (*German Idealism*) addresses the constructivist aspect of Kant's critical philosophy or later post-Kantian German idealism. Beiser goes out of his way to deny that subjectivism plays an important role in Kant's critical idealism.
  31. See Robert Hanna, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, p. 22: "Kant's Copernican Revolution of 1781–7 is in this way an all-things-considered answer to the fundamental semantic question he raised in 1772: how can mental representations—and more specifically necessary a priori mental representations—refer to their objects. And the answer is that mental representations refer to their objects because 'objects must conform to our cognitions'; hence our true a priori judgments are necessarily true independently of all sense experience because they express just those cognitive forms or structures to which all the proper objects of human cognition automatically conform."
  32. See Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigonen: Eine kritische Abhandlung*, Stuttgart: Carl Schober Verlag, 1865, 1912.



33. See Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, translated by Fred Bradley and T. J. Trenn, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
34. "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient." Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, Paris: Gallimard, 1976, II, p. 13.
35. See chap. 5: "Kind-making: The Case of Child Abuse," in Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* pp. 125–162.

# ONE

## Idealism, Platonic Idealism, and the New Way of Ideas

1. Norman Kemp Smith, *Prolegomena To An Idealist Theory of Knowledge*, London: Macmillan, 1924, p. 1.
2. See Editor's Introduction to A. C. Ewing, editor, *The Idealist Tradition From Berkeley to Blanshard*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957, p. 4.
3. M. F. Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy. What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *Philosophical Review* 91 (1), January 1982, p. 3.
4. See Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G. W. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, §§ 61–63, p. 10E.
6. See chap. 7: "Sentence-final particles," in Charles N. Li and Sandra A. Thompson, *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 238–318.
7. G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, edited by C. I. Gerhardt, Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–1890, IV, pp. 559–560.
8. See "First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge," in J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, edited and translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 3–28.
9. See Bernard Williams, "Wittgenstein and Idealism," in *Understanding Wittgenstein*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974. According to Williams, Wittgenstein's later philosophy is a form of transcendental idealism. This claim is denied by Malcolm. See Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein and Idealism," in *Idealism: Past and Present*, edited by Godfrey Vesey, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
10. Rescher has often written on idealism. He tends to see idealism and pragmatism as closely related. See, e.g., Nicholas Rescher, *A System of Pragmatic Idealism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992–1993, 3 vols.

11. *German Idealist Philosophy*, edited by Rüdiger Bubner, London: Penguin, 1997, p. xvi.
12. See Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
13. See “the Age of the World Picture,” in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, pp. 115–154.
14. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, edited by Karl Ameriks, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 8.
15. Though Kant is also very critical of Leibniz, who is sometimes classed as an idealist, his objections do not concern the views Leibniz has about the existence of the external world.
16. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, New York: Harper, 1963, p. 63.
17. For discussion, see H. F. Cherniss, “The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas,” *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Gregory Vlastos, New York: Doubleday, 1971, I, pp. 16–27; and A. Wedberg, “The Theory of Ideas,” *ibid.*, pp. 28–52.
18. The idea that there is idealism in Plato in particular or even in ancient philosophy is vigorously disputed by Burnyeat, who argues that it could only come about after Descartes’ initiated radical doubt about the real at the dawn of modern philosophy. But Burnyeat is casting his net too narrowly in taking idealism on either the Berkeleyan model or on what Kant rejects in terms of the so-called denial of the existence of the world. See Burnyeat, “Idealism and Greek Philosophy.”
19. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 370, pp. 395–396.
20. This debate is enormous. See, e.g., W. D. Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
21. *Sophist* 246C.
22. *Ibid.*, 248A.
23. F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, Indianapolis: LLA, n.d., pp. 33–35.
24. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 6, 987a 29–987a 16.
25. For discussion, see Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004.
26. See Steven Weinberg, “The Revolution That Didn’t Happen,” in *The New York Review of Books*, October 8, 1998, pp. 48–52.
27. For a recent defense of scientific realism, see Jerrold Aronson, Rom Harré, and Eileen Cornell Way, *Realism Rescued: How Scientific Progress is Possible*, Chicago: Open Court, 1995.

28. See Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
29. See Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body, and World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
30. "Knowledge of the real, the theory asserts, need[s] an intermediary object between the knowing mind and the ultimate object. This intermediary object is the one immediately given or thought and represents the ultimate object. The immediate object when I look at this table is no physical entity but an idea which represents the table." R. I. Aaron, *John Locke*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 101–102.
31. See Hilary Putnam, *Representation and Reality*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
32. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, translated by Elisabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970, I, p. 138.
33. Ibid. p. 160.
34. Ibid., p. 159.
35. Anthony Kenny, "Descartes on Ideas," in *Descartes*, edited by Willis Doney, p. 229. Kenny refers to L. J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 152.
36. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, I, p. 159.
37. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, translated by Elisabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970, II, pp. 66–67.
38. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, I, p. 138.
39. R. A. Watson, *Representational Ideas from Plato to Churchland*, Boston: Kluwer, 1995, p. 47.
40. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, I, p. 161.
41. Ibid., II, p. 70.
42. *Ethics*, in *Works of Spinoza*, translated by R. H. M. Elwes, New York: Dover, 1951, 2 vols., II, Definition 3, p. 82.
43. Ibid., pp. 86–87.
44. "Monadology," §§ 62, 63, 78, in *Leibniz, Basic Writings*, with an introduction by Paul Janet, translated by George R. Montgomery, La Salle: Open Court, 1957, pp. 265, 268–269.
45. "Discourse on Metaphysics," in *Leibniz, Basic Writings*, § 26, pp. 44–45.
46. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, in George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge, and Three Dialogues*, edited, with an introduction, by Howard Robinson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, §§85–86, pp. 61–62.
47. See Antoine Arnauld, *L'art de penser: La Logique de Port-Royal*, edited by

- Bruno Baron von Freytag Löringhoff and Herbert E. Brekle, Stuttgart: Frommann, 1965, I, chap. 6.
48. For an account of the controversy between Locke and Stillingfleet, see "Prolegomena: Biographical, Critical, and Historical," in John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, collated and annotated by A. C. Fraser, New York: Dover, 1959, I, pp. xli–xlii.
  49. Ibid., IV, iv, 3.
  50. The interpretation of Locke's position is delicate. A commitment to the view that we directly know only our own ideas is seen as favoring skepticism by Reid in answering Locke, by Kant in replying to Descartes and Berkeley, and by Moore in answering Kant and all idealists of whatever kind, who supposedly contend that reality, understood as the mind-independent external world, is confined to the contents of our minds.
  51. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, p. 145.
  52. Ibid., II, p. 521.
  53. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, B 377, p. 399.
  54. See, e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by W. S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996. For Pluhar's reason for translating "Vorstellung" as "presentation," see p. 22 n. 73.
  55. To Marcus Herz, February 21, 1772, in Immanuel Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99*, translated by Arnulf Zweig, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 71.
  56. The relation of the Platonic theory of ideas to idealism has often been discussed. See, e.g., Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961.
  57. Even well-informed scholars of German idealism occasionally admit a possible link between the critical philosophy and English empiricism. Beiser counterposes subjectivist interpretations, according to which Kant is the epitome of the new way of ideas, and objectivist interpretations, according to which the *Critique* is the antidote to the new way of ideas. Beiser, *German Idealism*, pp. 17–19. Yet he goes on to argue that Kant is in many ways an adherent of the theory of ideas, by which he presumably means the new way of ideas, not Platonism (ibid., pp. 132–147, esp. p. 133).
  58. See the letters from Hamann to Herder, dated May 10 and December 9, 1781, in W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel, *Briefwechsel*, Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955–1957, IV, pp. 293–294, 355. Others who shared this general view,

according to Beiser, were the popular empiricist thinkers, the rationalist metaphysicians, and the “objective” or “absolute” idealists. Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 48.

59. Many thinkers simply reject Berkeley without argument or any real effort to assess his position. Some, however, attempt to show how his position could be defended. See Howard Robinson, “The General Form of the Argument for Berkelian Idealism,” in *Philosophy of Mind: Contemporary Readings*, edited by Timothy O’Connor and David Robb, London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 81–104.
60. M. F. Burnyeat, “Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed,” *Philosophical Review* 91 (1), January 1982, pp. 7–8.
61. One important source of this view is in “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” (1956), in Wilfrid Sellars, *Mind, Perception, and Reality*, Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1991, pp. 127–196.
62. Introduction to *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, edited by M. R. Ayers, London: Dent, 1992, sec. 12, pp. 69–70.
63. Berkeley, *A New Theory of Vision*, in *ibid.*, § 125, p. 45.
64. § 116, in Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, p. 113.
65. *Ibid.*, §§85–86, pp. 61–62.
66. *Ibid.*, pt. I, p. 94.

## TWO

### German Idealism, British Idealism, and Later Developments

1. Leibniz’s idealism is sometimes understood in relation to Platonic idealism. See Christia Mercer, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
2. “A construction of the whole of reality out of perceiving substances and their perceptions and appetites exemplifies a broadly idealist approach to metaphysics. Leibniz was the first of the great modern philosophers to develop an idealist metaphysics.” Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 217.
3. Thomas Willey, *Back To Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860–1914*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978.
4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hegel’s Philosophy and Its Aftereffects Until Today,” in *Reason in the Age of Science*, translated by F. G. Lawrence, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996, p. 25.

5. Rüdiger Bubner, editor, *German Idealist Philosophy*, London: Penguin, 1997, p. xix.
6. Ibid., p. xvii.
7. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, edited by Karl Ameriks, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 4.
8. See Hegel, "Die neueste deutsche Philosophie," in *Hegel-Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Markus Michal, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970, XX, pp. 314ff.
9. See Tom Rockmore, "On Schelling's Critique of Hegel," in *Schelling: Zwischen Kant und Hegel*, edited by Christoph Asmuth, Alfred Denker, and Michael Vater, Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 2001, pp. 351-362.
10. See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986.
11. See Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955.
12. See Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 11. Beiser has more recently muted his criticism of Hegel in an exposition of the main themes in Hegel's position.
13. See Frederick C. Beiser, *Hegel*, New York: Routledge, 2005.
14. Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 467.
15. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, translated by Richard Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
16. See Dieter Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewusstsein: Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794-1795)*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992.
17. See Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997.
18. See Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
19. See Günter Zöller, *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1997.
20. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf, Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.
21. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, B xxxviii, p. 120.

22. See Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican Revolution*, translated by Robert M. Wallace, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987.
23. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 741, p. 630.
24. See Manfred Baum, "Erkennen und Machen in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*," in *Probleme der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft": Kant-Tagung Marburg 1981*, edited by Burkhard Tuschling, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984, pp. 161–177.
25. Montaigne apparently anticipates Kant's Copernican revolution when he claims: "Now, since our state makes things correspond to itself and transforms them in conformity with itself, we can no longer claim to know what anything truly is: nothing reaches us except as altered and falsified by our senses." Michel Montaigne, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, p. 184.
26. See Ludwik Fleck, *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, edited by T. J. Trenn and R. K. Merton, translated by Fred Bradley and T. J. Trenn, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
27. Constructivism is not often studied. For a small but very useful study, see Arthur Child, *Making and Knowing in Hobbes, Vico, and Dewey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953.
28. J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, edited by Martin Bollacher, Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989, bk. 13, chap. 7, p. 573.
29. Novalis (Heinrich von Ofterdingen), *Hemsterhuis-Studien*, II, p. 378, cited in Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 431. See also Novalis, *Fichte-Studien*, in *Novalis-Schriften*, edited by R. Samuel, H.-J. Mähl, and G. Schultz, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960–1988, no. 568, II, p. 274; and *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, with an introduction by Hans-Joachim Mahl, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1993, no. 820, II, p. 665.
30. For Lessing's view of constructivism, see *Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen*, in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, edited by E. Behler, J.-J. Anstett, and H. Eichner, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–, XXIII, pp. 46–102, esp. 51–60.
31. Hacking has done much to discredit the excesses of contemporary constructivism without any attention to its epistemological uses in such thinkers as Kant. See Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
32. The English-language discussion often devotes little space to this crucial aspect of Kant's position. Paton considers the question in a page and a half. H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936, 1961, 2 vols., I, pp. 75–76. Allison, who devotes two

pages to the topic, thinks that Kant is contrasting transcendental realism and transcendental idealism. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, pp. 28–30.

33. In the first letter of his *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, which appeared in August 1786, hence before the second edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Reinhold refers to the relation between Kant and revolution (K. L. Reinhold, "Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie," in *Teutscher Zeitschrift*, August 1786, 27, p. 124–125) and then to Kant and Copernicus (*ibid.*, p. 126).
34. In a *Nachruf* on the occasion of Kant's death, Schelling suggests that Kant intends to make a Copernican turn. "Ähnlich wie sein Landsmann Copernikus, der die Bewegung aus dem Centrum in die Peripherie verlegte, kehrte er zuerst von Grund aus die Vorstellung um, nach welcher das Subjekt unthätig und rühig empfangend, der Gegenstand aber wirksam ist: eine Umkehrung, die sich in alle Zweige des Wissens wie durch eine elektrische Wirkung fortleitete." "Immanuel Kant" (1804), in *Schellings Werke*, Munich: Beck, 1958, III, p. 599.
35. See Ermanno Bencivenga, *Kant's Copernican Revolution Revisited: Paradigm, Metaphor, and Incommensurability in the History of Science*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. See also Hans Blumenberg, "What Is Copernican in Kant's Turning?" chap. 5 of *The Genesis of the Copernican Revolution*, pp. 595–614; Daniel Bonevac, "Kant's Copernican Revolution," in Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *The Age of German Idealism*, New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 40–65; S. M. Engel, "Kant's Copernican Analogy: A Re-Examination," in *Kant-Studien* 54, 1963, pp. 243–251; David Ingram, "The Copernican Revolution Revisited: Paradigm, Metaphor and Incommensurability in the History of Science—Blumenberg's Response to Kuhn and Davidson," in *History of the Human Sciences* 6, 1993, pp. 11–35; Pierre Kerszberg, "Two Senses of Kant's Copernican Revolution," *Kant-Studien* 80, 1989, pp. 63–80.
36. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xiii, p. 109.
37. *Ibid.*, B xxii, fn, p. 113.
38. *Ibid.*, B 1, p. 127.
39. Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Critique de la représentation*, Paris: Vrin, 2000.
40. For the argument supporting this conclusion, see Tom Rockmore, "Fichte and Idealism," *Akten der Münchener-Fichte-Tagung*, edited by Günter Zöller, forthcoming.
41. See J. G. Fichte, *Addresses To The German Nation*, translated by G. A. Kelly, New York: Harper and Row, 1968.



42. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 181, pp. 273–274.
43. Husserl devotes most of the first volume of *Logical Investigations* to a critique of psychologism. See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, translated by J. N. Findlay, with a new preface by Michael Dummett and edited with a new introduction by Dermot Moran, London: Routledge, 2001, 2 vols., vol. 1.
44. Ibid., A ix, pp. 99–100.
45. Ibid., B 131, p. 246.
46. Pinkard, who simply neglects the epistemological theme in his detailed recent study, seems to think that the concern with knowledge is not a central theme in German idealism. See Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
47. Beiser, who sees the importance of knowledge as a guiding thread, develops an anti-Hegelian line pioneered by Schelling according to which Hegel is not an important figure and the discussion reaches a peak in the late Schelling. Beiser, *German Idealism*.
48. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xlv, p. 123.
49. See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Reinhold: Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, translated by James Hebbeler, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
50. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 860, p. 691.
51. Reinhold's supposed misunderstandings of Kant provide the official excuse for Hegel's first philosophical publication, widely known as the *Differenzschrift*. The entire last section of this little book is devoted to harsh and ironical criticism of Reinhold. See Hegel, *Difference*, pp. 174–195.
52. Habermas follows Apel in introducing a concept of the plural subject as if this had not already been done by a host of other thinkers, specifically including Hegel. Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, 1993, p. 57.
53. J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* (1794), in *The Science of Knowledge*, translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 246.
54. Ibid., p. 249.
55. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 69.
56. This is a frequent theme in Fichte's writing early and late. Besides the *Addresses to the German Nation*, which is late, his early defense of the

- French Revolution includes two remarkable texts from 1793: “Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten,” in *Fichtes Werke*, edited by I. H. Fichte, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971, VI, pp. 3–35; and “Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publicums über die französische Revolution,” *ibid.*, pp. 39–288.
57. See, e.g., Miklos Vetö, *Le Fondement selon Schelling*, Paris: Beauchesnes, 1977.
  58. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, translated by Peter Heath, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978, p. 18.
  59. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
  60. See part 2, prop. VII, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Works of Spinoza*, translated by R. M. H. Elwes, New York: Dover, 1951, II, p. 86.
  61. Schelling, *System*, p. 3.
  62. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
  63. In the wake of the great French Revolution, the problem of history attracted increasing attention from a variety of thinkers including Herder and F. Schlegel. For Schlegel’s view of historicism, see *Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen*, in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, edited by E. Behler, J.-J. Anstett, and H. Eichner, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–, XXIII, pp. 46–102, esp. 51–60.
  64. See J. G. Fichte, *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1956.
  65. Schelling, *System*, p. 4.
  66. “Als idealistisch bezeichne ich die—zumal durch Hegel verbindlich gemachte—Überzeugung, Bewusstsein sei ein selbstgenügsames Phänomenon, das auch noch die Voraussetzungen seines Bestandes aus eigenen Mitteln sich verständlich zu machen vermöge. Dagegen ist die Frühromantik überzeugt, das Selbstsein einem transzendentalen Grunde sich verdankt, der sich *nicht* in die Immanenz des Bewusstseins auflösen lasse.” Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung. Die Anfänge der Frühromantik*, Frankfurt a. M., 1997, p. 359.
  67. Frischmann further objects that the early romantics, for instance Schlegel, did not attribute “Selbstsein” to a transcendental ground. Bärbel Frischmann, *Vom transzendentalen zum frühromantischen Idealismus: J. G. Fichte und Fr. Schlegel*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005, p. 13.
  68. Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 34.
  69. Hegel, *Difference*, pp. 79–81.
  70. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 382, p. 401.
  71. Hegel, *Difference*, p. 119.

72. Ibid., p. 127.
73. Ibid., p. 155.
74. Ibid., p. 156.
75. Ibid., pp. 170–172.
76. See Tom Rockmore, *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
77. *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*, p. 198.
78. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 1, p. 127.
79. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, New York: Oxford, 1977, § 82, pp. 52–53; translation modified.
80. Ibid., § 84, p. 53; translation modified.
81. Ibid., § 85, p. 54; translation modified.
82. Ibid., § 197, p. 120; translation modified.
83. Ibid., § 232, p. 139.
84. Ibid., § 233, p. 140.
85. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic (with the Zusätze)*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, § 25, p. 64.
86. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, § 67, p. 54.
87. Karl Marx, *Capital*, edited by Frederick Engels, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, New York: International Publishers, 1967, I, p. 20.
88. See Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, edited by C. P. Dutt, New York: International Publishers, 1941.
89. See Tom Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx and the German Philosophical Tradition*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980, pp. 28–53.
90. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 4, pp. 20–21.
91. Ibid., § 65, p. 52.
92. Ibid., § 67, p. 54.
93. Lukács, who did not have the “Paris Manuscripts,” which had not yet been published, when he wrote, famously conflated alienation and objectification. See Georg Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, translated by R. L. Livingstone, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971, pp. 86–222.
94. Friedrich Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1923, IV, p. 417.

95. See, e.g., Klaus Christian Köhnke, *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Willey, *Back to Kant*; Alexis Philonenko, *L'École de Marbourg. Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer (A la recherche de la vérité)*, Paris: Vrin, 1989.
96. See *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Metaphysics*, translated by Richard Toft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
97. According to Windelband, the struggle to define the importance of the natural scientific conception of phenomena is the leading theme in nineteenth-century philosophy. See Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, translated by James H. Tufts, New York: Harper, 1958, II, pp. 624, 626.
98. See Antonio Aliotta, *The Idealistic Reaction Against Science*, translated by Agnes McCaskill, London: Macmillan, 1914.
99. Gadamer believes this is a main reason for the decline of German idealism after Hegel. "Hegel's Philosophy and Its Aftereffects Until Today," p. 25.
100. F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, edited by K. F. A. Schelling, Stuttgart, 1856–1861, I/4, p. 403.
101. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, § 16, p. 9.
102. Hegel to Schelling, Bamberg, May 1, 1807, in *Hegel: The Letters*, translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 80.
103. Schelling to Hegel, November 2, 1807, cited in *Hegel: The Letters*, p. 80. For Schelling's critique of Hegel, see Klaus Brinkmann, "Schellings Hegel-Kritik," in *Die ontologische Option: Studien zu Hegel's Propädeutik, Schellings Hegel-Kritik und Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, edited by Klaus Hartmann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), pp. 117–210.
104. See F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, translated by Andrew Bowie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. See also *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie: Münchener Vorlesungen (Aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlass)* in F. W. J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985, III, pp. 417–616. Subsequent references (to the English translation and then the German original) are given in the text.
105. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
106. It is worked out by others, surprisingly by Lukács, the important Marx-

- ist thinker, in his late, unfinished treatise of social ontology. See Georg Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being: 1. Hegel*, translated by D. Fernbach, London: The Merlin Press, 1978.
107. F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, translated by Andrew Bowie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 149.
  108. Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany, 1831–1933*, translated by Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 169.
  109. Henry Jones, *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Lotze*, Glasgow: Maclehose and Sons, 1895, p. ix.
  110. Lotze, *Microcosmos*, pp. 355–356.
  111. See Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, translated by Emile Burns, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1947.
  112. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, translated by J. W. Ellington, Cambridge: Hackett, 1977, § 60, p. 96.
  113. See J. G. Fichte, "First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge," in *The Science of Knowledge*, pp. 3–28.
  114. See F. A. Lange, *The History of Materialism*, translated by E. E. Thomas, London: Kegan Paul, 1925.
  115. See especially R. H. Lotze, *Logik*, Leipzig, 1843. See also R. H. Lotze, *System der Philosophie*, vol. 1: *Logik*, Leipzig, 1874; and his *System of Philosophy*, pt. I: *Logic*, translated by Bernard Bosanquet, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887.
  116. Lotze, *Microcosmos: An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World*, translated by E. Hamilton and E. Constance Jones, New York: Scribner and Welford, 1888, pp. 396–397.
  117. See Jacob Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, Giessen: E. Roth [1875]–87, 2 vols.
  118. See Louis Büchner, *Force and Matter: Empirico-Philosophical Studies*, edited by J. Frederick Collingwood, 2d English ed. (10th German ed.), London: Trübner, 1870.
  119. See F. A. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*, A. Kröner, 1926, 2 vols.
  120. In a letter from this period, he writes: "I take the Hegelian system to be a step backward towards Scholasticism from which we are really already free. Herbart, to whom I first attached myself, was for me only a bridge to Kant, to whom so many honest researchers return in order to, where possible, complete what Kant had only half done: the annihilation of metaphysics." O. A. Ellissen, *Friedrich Albert Lange: Eine Lebensbeschreibung*, Leipzig: Julius Baedeker, 1894, p. 106.
  121. V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on*

- a *Reactionary Philosophy*, translated by A. Fineberg, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947, chap. 4.
122. W. Windelband, *Kuno Fischer*, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1907, pp. 24–25.
  123. See, e.g., Klaus Christian Köhnke, *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
  124. See Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigonen: Eine kritische Abhandlung* (1865), Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1912.
  125. “Fischer, Kuno,” in *Biographisches Jahrbuch und deutscher Nekrolog*, 6:520, cited in Willey, *Back to Kant*, p. 60.
  126. Wilhelm Windelband, *Kuno Fischer: Gedächtnisrede bei der Trauerfeier der Universität in der Stadthalle zu Heidelberg*, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1907, pp. 30–31.
  127. “Über Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Erkenntnistheorie,” in Eduard Zeller, *Vorträge und Abhandlungen*, Leipzig: Fues, 1887, II, p. 480.
  128. *Ibid.*, p. 481.
  129. *Ibid.*, p. 490.
  130. There were a variety of other schools as well, not all of them in Germany, including the neocritical school (Alois Riehl, Friedrich Paulsen, Oswald Külpe, Heinrich Maier, Ostave Hamelin, François Thomas Pilon, and Gaston Milhaud); empiriocriticism (Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach); the Frisian school (Jakob Friedrich Fries and Leonard Nelson); the Russian neo-Kantian school (Georgij Ivanovich Tschelpanov and Michael Matvejvitch Troizki), and so on.
  131. Heidegger, who was an opponent of axiology, later condemned the concern with values as falling short of true allegiance to National Socialism. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction To Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977, p. 199.
  132. Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag, 1902, p. 20.
  133. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
  134. Ernst Cassirer, “Paul Natorp,” in *Kant-Studien* 30 (3–4), 1925, p. 276.
  135. See, e.g., *Plato’s Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus* (1903), Hamburg, Heiner, 1994, and *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems im Altertum: Protagoras, Demokrit, Epikur und die Skepsis*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965.
  136. See Ernst Cassirer, *Leibniz’ System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen*, Marburg: Elwert, 1902.
  137. See Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1922–23, 4 vols. Volume 4

- appeared as *The Problem of Knowledge; Philosophy, Science, and History since Hegel*, translated by William H. Woglom and Charles W. Hendel, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.
138. See Ernst Cassirer, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff: Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen der Erkenntniskritik*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1910. Translated as *Substance and Function*, W. Curtis Swabey and Marie Collins Swabey, trans., Chicago: Open Court, 1923.
  139. See Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Einsteinschen Relativitätstheorie: Erkenntnistheoretische Betrachtungen*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1921. Translated as *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, W. Curtis Swabey and Marie Collins Swabey, trans., Chicago: Open Court, 1923.
  140. See Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1927. Translated as *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, Mario Damandi, trans., New York: Harper, 1964. See also Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1932. Translated as *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.
  141. See Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Erster Teil: Die Sprache*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923. Translated as *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 1: *Language*, Charles W. Hendel, trans., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955; *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1925. Translated as *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2: *Mythical Thought*, Charles W. Hendel, trans., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955; *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Dritter Teil: Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1929. Translated as *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 3: *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, Charles W. Hendel, trans., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.
  142. See Hans Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, New York: Dover, 1958.
  143. Cassirer, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, p. 20.
  144. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by Suzanne K. Langer, New York: Harper, 1946.
  145. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
  146. *Ibid.*
  147. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
  148. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
  149. See Wilhelm Windelband, *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft: Rektoratsrede*, Strassburg: Heitz, 1904.

150. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1: *Frühe Schriften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972, p. 190.
151. Heinrich Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1912, p. 89.
152. Heinrich Rickert, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis: Einführung in die Transzendentalphilosophie*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1915, pp. 453f.
153. See Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relation between Dialectics and Economics*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976, and Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, translated by James H. Nichols, New York: Basic Books, 1969.
154. See, for discussion, Tom Rockmore, *Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
155. Muirhead makes this point well. "The history in England of what at the present day is known as idealistic philosophy still remains to be written. When it comes to be written, it will, I believe, be found not less continuous and not less characteristic of the English genius, than that which is commonly taken to be its main contribution to philosophy." J. H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1930, p. 262.
156. J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, London: Longman, Roberts and Green, 1865.
157. This conflation is contained in the title of Robbins' study. See Robbins, *The British Hegelians, 1875-1925*, New York: Garland, 1982.
158. J. Pucelle, *L'Idéalisme en Angleterre de Coleridge à Bradley*, Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1955, p. 15.
159. See E. Caird, *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant*, Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1877.
160. On Coleridge's relation to Kant, see René Wellek, *Kant in England, 1793-1838*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931.
161. See his critical "Introductions to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*," in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, edited by R. L. Nettleship, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969, I, pp. 1-371.
162. For Bradley's view of his relation to Hegel and Hegelianism, see F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, London: Oxford University Press, 1922, p. x.
163. Pucelle, *Idéalisme en Angleterre*, pp. 54, 126, 191, 292.
164. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
165. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1965, vol. 8, part 1, pp. 171-172.



166. See David Bloor, "The Question of Linguistic Idealism Revisited," in *Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by Hans Sluga and David F. Sterne, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 354-382.
167. See Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
168. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
169. See Benedetto Croce, *Ce qui est vivant et ce qui est mort de la Philosophie de Hegel*, translated by Henri Buriot, Paris: V. Giard, 1910.
170. See Benedetto Croce, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx*, translated by C. M. Meredith and with an introduction by A. D. Lindsay, London: Frank Cass, 1966.
171. See Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, translated by R. G. Collingwood, New York: Russell and Russell, 1964.
172. Reprinted in *Controversie sulla storia*, edited by R. V. Cavalieri, Milan: Unicopli, 1993.
173. See "Filosofia e metodologia," in Benedetto Croce, *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, Bari: Laterza, 1966, pp. 140-153.
174. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
175. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
176. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
179. See *ibid.*, p. 140.
180. See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
181. See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
182. See Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939, 2 vols.
183. Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Analysis*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964.
184. See Nicholas Rescher, *Conceptual Idealism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1973.
185. See Nicholas Rescher, *A System of Pragmatic Idealism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992-93, 3 vols.

### THREE

#### Some Main Criticisms of Idealism

1. It is not clear how materialism should be understood in relation to Marx. Kline has studied this question in detail. See G. L. Kline, "The Myth

- of Marx's Materialism," in *Philosophical Sovietology: The Pursuit of a Science*, edited by Helmut Dahm, Thomas J. Blakeley, and George Kline, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1988.
2. See, e.g. Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
  3. Aristotle, *Politics*, II, 2–4, translated by Benjamin Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 2001–2004.
  4. See Anders Wedberg, "The Theory of Ideas," in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, vol. I: *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Gregory Vlastos, Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1971, pp. 42ff.
  5. See R. E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues," *ibid.*, pp. 167–183.
  6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 6–9, translated by W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, II, pp. 1561–1564.
  7. *Ibid.*, XIII, 4–5, pp. 1705–1707.
  8. *Ibid.*, I, 6, 987b11–12, p. 1561.
  9. *Ibid.*, I, 6, 987b17–20, p. 1561.
  10. *Ibid.*, I, 6–8, pp. 1561–1565.
  11. See "Zwölftes Kapitel: Die Aristotelische Kritik der Ideenlehre," in Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961, pp. 419–456.
  12. See J. N. Findlay, *Plato and Platonism*, New York: New York Times Books, 1978.
  13. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle*, New York: Meridian, 1959, p. 156.
  14. For an account, see H. J. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, edited and translated by J. R. Catan, Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.
  15. See Democritus, fr. 23: "Wretched mind, you take your evidence from us and yet you overthrow us? The overthrow is a fall for you." *The Atomists Leucippus and Democritus: Fragments*, translated by C. C. W. Taylor, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 13.
  16. Hume's measured view of metaphysics is not sufficiently noted. See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Charles W. Hendel, Indianapolis: LLA, 1955, pp. 18–25.
  17. For recent, detailed discussion, see Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 17–217. Beiser's emphasis on Kant's desire to avoid subjectivism is surely correct.
  18. See P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of*

*Pure Reason*, London: Methuen, 1966, p. 256. "Kant's analysis of experience drives steadily to the conclusion that the experience of a conceptualizing and potentially self-conscious being must include awareness of objects conceived of as existing and enjoying their own states and relations independently of any particular states of awareness of them. For us, these objects are spatial objects, material bodies in space."

19. Kant, *Inaugural Dissertation*, §§ 11–12.
20. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, B xl, pp. 121–122.
21. *Ibid.*, B 566, pp. 535–536.
22. *Ibid.*, A 369, p. 426.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, A 376, pp. 429–430.
25. *Ibid.*, A 380, pp. 431–432.
26. Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, translated by J. W. Ellington, Cambridge: Hackett, 1977, p. 37.
27. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 274–275, pp. 326–327.
28. *Ibid.*, B xxxviii–xl, pp. 120–121.
29. Kant, *Nova Dilucidatio*, in *Kant-Werke*, edited by Wilhelm Weischedel, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975, I, p. 493.
30. *Ibid.*, I, p. 495. Beiser thinks that Kant's main concern in refuting idealism is to refute Leibniz. Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 33. But this view fails to address Kant's objections to Descartes, Berkeley, and others.
31. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 380, p. 431.
32. *Ibid.*, B 274, p. 326.
33. *Ibid.*, B 275, pp. 326–327.
34. This point is disputed in the Descartes literature. For an empirical reading of the cogito, see Jaako Hintikka, "Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?" in *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Willis Doney, Garden City: Doubleday, 1967, pp. 108–139.
35. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, translated by Elisabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970, I, "Sixth Meditation," p. 187.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
37. See Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749), Editions Garnier, Paris: Bordas, 1990, p. 114: "On appelle *idéalistes* ces philosophes qui, n'ayant conscience que de leur existence et des sensations qui se succèdent au dedans d'eux-mêmes, n'admettent pas autre chose: système extravagant qui ne pouvait, ce me semble, devoir sa naissance qu'à des aveugles; système

qui, à la honte de l'esprit humain et de la philosophie, est le plus difficile à combattre, quoique le plus absurde de tous. Il est exposé avec autant de franchise que de clarté dans trois dialogues du docteur Berkeley, évêque de Cloyne."

38. See *ibid.*, pp. 114–115. "[D]'ailleurs, remarque judicieusement l'auteur de l'*Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, soit que nous nous élevions jusqu'aux cieux, soit que nous descendions jusque dans les abîmes, nous ne sortons jamais de nous-mêmes; et ce n'est que notre propre pensée que nous apercevons: or c'est là le résultat du premier dialogue de Berkeley, et le fondement de tout son système."
39. See Christian Wolff, *Psychologia rationalis*, Frankfurt: Officina libraria Rengeriana, 1734, p. 36: "Those thinkers are called 'idealists' who acknowledge only ideal objects existing in our minds, denying the independent reality of the world and the existence of material bodies."
40. "To J. S. Beck, December 4, 1792," in Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99*, translated by Arnulf Zweig, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 198.
41. For this well-known story, see Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, translated by James Haden, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 219–221.
42. The review, the first concerning Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, originally appeared anonymously in the *Zugabe zu den Göttinger gelehrten Anzeigen* on January 19, 1782, pp. 40–48. It is reprinted in *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Brigitte Sassen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 50–58.
43. "From J. S. Beck, November 10, 1792," in Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99*, p. 195.
44. "Review of Aenesidemus," in *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 74.
45. Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 37.
46. For a careful account of Eberhard's criticism and Kant's reaction to it, see Henry E. Allison's "A Historical-Critical Introduction" to *The Kant–Eberhard Controversy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, pp. 1–107.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 171–178.
48. See, for Kant's reply to Eberhard, "On A Discovery According to Which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One," *ibid.*, pp. 107–160.

49. Introduction to *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, edited by M. R. Ayers, London: Dent, 1992, § 12, pp. 69–70.
50. *A New Theory of Vision*, *ibid.*, § 125, p. 45.
51. *Principles*, *ibid.*, § 116, p. 113.
52. Wittgenstein attacks the very idea of a private language as presupposed by Cartesianism and empiricism. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York: Macmillan, 1966, §§ 243–315, pp. 88/88e–104/104e.
53. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxvii, pp. 115–116.
54. *Ibid.*, B 275, pp. 326–327.
55. *Ibid.*, B 218, pp. 295–296.
56. This is the basis of Sartre’s conception of so-called pre-thetic consciousness. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1973, pp. 9–17.
57. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 157, pp. 259–260.
58. Kant brings this charge against Fichte. See “Kant’s Open Letter on Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, August 7, 1799,” in Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence*, 1769–99, pp. 253–254.
59. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 131, p. 246.
60. *Ibid.*, B xxxviii, pp. 120–121.
61. *Ibid.*, B xxxix, p. 121.
62. *Ibid.*, B 275, pp. 326–327.
63. *Ibid.*, B xxxix, p. 121.
64. This is an implicit theme in Bernstein. See Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.
65. Kant rejected not only Fichte’s reading of his position but also what he took to be Fichte’s own position. See “Kant’s Open Letter on Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, August 7, 1799,” in Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence*, 1769–99, pp. 253–254.
66. See Hegel’s letter of April 16, 1795, to Schelling, in Hegel: *The Letters*, translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 35: “From the Kantian system and its highest completion I expect a revolution in Germany. It will proceed from principles that are present and that only need to be elaborated generally and applied to all hitherto existing knowledge. An esoteric philosophy will, to be sure, always remain, and the idea of God as the Absolute Self will be part of it. After a more recent study of the postulates of practical reason I had a presentiment of what you clearly laid out for me in your last letter,

of what I found in your writing, and of what Fichte's *Foundation of the Science of Knowledge* will disclose to me completely."

67. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf, Albany: SUNY Press, 1977, p. 79.
68. Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophie*, Jena: Manke, 1790, 2 vols.
69. *Philosophischer Briefwechsel nebst einem demselben vorausgeschickten Manifest*, in *Salomon Maimon: Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Valerio Verra, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970, IV, p. 209.
70. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxii, n.
71. "Als objektive Totalität begründet das Wissen—sich zugleich immer, je mehr es sich bildet, und seine Teile sind nur gleichzeitig mit diesem Ganzen der Erkenntnisse begründet. Mittelpunkt und Kreis sind so aufeinander bezogen, dass der erste Anfang des Kreises schon eine Beziehung auf den Mittelpunkt ist, und dieser ist nicht ein vollständiger Mittelpunkt, wenn nicht alle seine Beziehungen, der ganze Kreis, vollendet sind,—ein Ganzes, das so wenig einer besonderer Handhabe des Begründens bedarf als die Erde einer besonderen Handhabe, um von der Kraft, die sie um die Sonne führt und zugleich in der ganzen lebendigen Mannigfaltigkeit ihrer Gestalten hält, gefasst zu werden." G. W. F. Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1962, p. 99.
72. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1996, p. 630.
73. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, New York: Oxford, 1977, § 73, p. 46.
74. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic (with the Zusätze)*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991, § 10, pp. 33–34.
75. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 579.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 579–580.
77. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, § 239, p. 145.
78. *Ibid.*, § 236, p. 143.
79. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 573.
80. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Hegel-Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Rinus Michel, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970, XX, pp. 314–315.
81. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 629.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 579.

83. Ibid., pp. 581–582.
84. Ibid., pp. 583–584.
85. Ibid., p. 594.
86. F. H. Jacobi, “David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus,” in *Ueber den transzendentalen Idealismus*, in *Werke*, edited by F. Roth and K. Köppen, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968, II, p. 304.
87. Hegel, *Difference*, p. 166.
88. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, pp. 575–576.
89. Ibid., p. 578.
90. Ibid., p. 580.
91. Ibid., p. 627.
92. Ibid., pp. 592–594.
93. Ibid., p. 602.
94. Ibid., p. 627.
95. Ibid., p. 629.
96. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989, p. 155.
97. This is a recurrent theme in Bosanquet’s writings. See Bernard Bosanquet, *Knowledge and Reality*, London: S. Sonnenschein, 1892; *The Distinction Between Mind and Its Objects*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913; and lecture 9, “Freedom and Initiative,” in *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, London: Macmillan, 1912.
98. See J. G. Fichte, “First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge,” in *The Science of Knowledge*, translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 3–28.
99. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978, p. 119.
100. This way of understanding idealism, which is especially prominent in analytic philosophy, is also accepted by such continental philosophers as Heidegger and Husserl.
101. See Paul Churchland, *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.
102. Karl Marx, “The Difference Between the Democritean and the Epicurean Philosophy of Nature,” in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, New York: International Publishers, 1975, I, pp. 25–105.
103. The literature on this relation is large and often not helpful. Hartmann’s book is particularly useful. See Klaus Hartmann, *Die Marx’sche Theorie: Eine philosophische Untersuchung zu den Hauptschriften*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970.

104. See Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, edited by C. P. Dutt, New York: International Publishers, 1941.
105. See Tom Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
106. See Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, translated by Ben Brewster, New York: Pantheon, 1970.
107. See Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, translated by Fred Halliday, London: NLB, 1970.
108. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*.
109. See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971.
110. Karl Marx, *Capital*, edited by Frederick Engels, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, New York: International Publishers, 1967, p. 20.
111. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 41.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
113. See Emil Lask, *Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1914.
114. See Tom Rockmore, "Engels, Lukács, and Kant's Thing In Itself," in *Engels After Marx*, edited by Manfred Steger and Terrell Carver, College Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1999, pp. 145–162.
115. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 23.
116. Lukács, "Reification and Class Consciousness," in *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 164.
117. Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 13.
118. This claim is made by Dummett, who links psychologism and idealism, and denied by Sluga. Michael Dummett, *Frege: The Philosophy of Language*, London: Duckworth, 1973, p. 684; and Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 9.
119. Sluga, *Gottlob Frege*, pp. 12–15, 59–60.
120. Thus Brandom, a recent analytic convert to Hegelianism, remains committed to metaphysical realism. "For the properties governing the application of those concepts [e.g., physical things such as electrons and aromatic compounds] depend on what inferences involving them are *correct*, that is, on what *really* follows from what. And that depends on how things really are with electrons and aromatic compounds, not just on what judgments and inferences we endorse." Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.



121. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Edinburgh: J. Bell, 1795, p. 128, cited in John W. Yolton, *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 3.
122. See G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, London: George Allen and Unwin, chap. 2.
123. Kant describes the appeal to "common sense" in place of insight and science as the way in which "the most superficial ranter can safely enter the lists with the most thorough thinker and hold his own." Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 4.
124. See "Proof of An External World," in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, New York: Collier, 1962, pp. 126–149.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
126. Beiser is the outstanding representative of this tendency. See Beiser, *German Idealism*.
127. See, e.g., his remarks at the end of the first part of the *Prolegomena*, where he describes his theory as transcendental idealism different from Descartes' empirical idealism and Berkeley's mystical idealism, and further relates it to the sensible representation of things. Kant, *Prolegomena*, pt. 1, Remark III, p. 34.
128. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, New York: Dover, 1969, I, Appendix: "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy," pp. 411–534.
129. Karl Ameriks, "Kantian Idealism Today," in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 9 (1992), pp. 333–334.
130. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 6–11. My discussion in this section is based on Allison's discussion.
131. Allison (*ibid.*, p. 450 n. 4) mentions a number of Kant's contemporaries who give similar readings. He also points to Vaihinger's summary of them. See Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1892, II, pp. 494–505.
132. For the main lines of Strawson's position, see P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London: Methuen, 1966, pp. 38–42, 235–262.
133. For a review of Strawson, see Jonathan Bennett, "Strawson on Kant," in *Philosophical Review*, 77 (3), July 1968, pp. 340–349.
134. Peter Strawson, "A Bit of Intellectual Biography," in *Strawson and Kant*, edited by H.-J. Glock, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 8–9.
135. "Kant's analysis of experience drives steadily to the conclusion that the experience of a conceptualizing and potentially self-conscious being must

- include awareness of objects conceived of as existing and enjoying their own states and relations independently of the occurrence of any particular states of awareness of them.” Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, p. 256.
136. Ibid., p. 262.
  137. See H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909, pp. 71–100.
  138. It is relevant to note that Strawson's effort to rehabilitate descriptive metaphysics is incompatible with a constructivist view of nature as a product of the human mind. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals*, London: Methuen, 1959, p. 22.
  139. For Allison's view of Strawson's reading of Kant, see Henry E. Allison, “Transcendental Idealism and Descriptive Metaphysics,” in *Kant-Studien* 60 (1969), pp. 216–223.
  140. For discussion, see Henry Allison, Review of Paul Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, in *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989), pp. 214–221.
  141. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 335.
  142. Ibid., p. 333.
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  144. Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 8.
  145. For discussion of Langton's view, see chap. 5: “Kant and the Short Argument to Humility,” in Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 135–158.
  146. Langton, *Kantian Humility*, p. 6, and chap. 10: “Realism or Idealism?” pp. 205–218.
  147. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, p. 250.
  148. Langton, *Kantian Humility*, p. 50.
  149. Guyer's argument is formulated as a refutation of Allison's. See Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, pp. 336–342. Allison's critique of Guyer is in fact a response to Guyer's critique of his own position.
  150. Since Langton begins by criticizing Allison (Langton, *Kantian Humility*, pp. 8–12), his discussion of her view is also in effect his response to her criticism.
  151. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 11.
  152. Ibid., p. 12.
  153. Ibid., p. 14.
  154. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 336. He describes it as an “anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty.”
  155. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 19.

#### FOUR

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